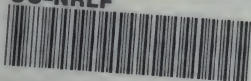
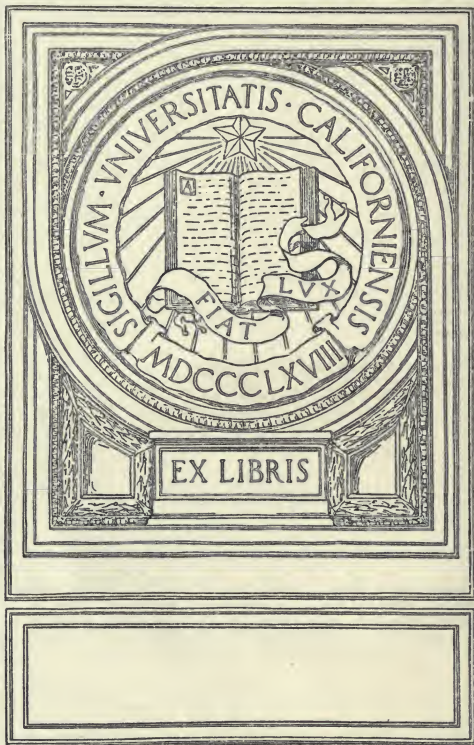


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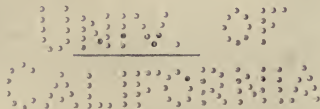
AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE.

BY

MAURICE HARTMANN.

Translated from the German

By M. E. NILES.



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TO THE
AMERICAN

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THE LAST DAYS OF A KING.

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD REPUBLICAN.

THE sea was of a brilliant purple; toward the southern and western horizons alone, had it retained its hue of deep blue, as evening advanced glowing and even blazing with a bright flame, giving the cliffs of Marseilles the appearance of melting ore, for over them stood the burning sun of Provence, which is wont to show himself in his greatest power and splendor at setting. The atmosphere was unusually clear and transparent, and one could have seen the Corsican coast from the hills of Toulon, had not the eye been dazzled by the stream of light which poured down from the sky and plunged into the waters. Notwithstanding, however, all the remarkable light and color of an August evening, this enchanting sea seemed lonely, sad, and deserted to the inhabitants of the coast, for it afforded not a single trace of the accustomed life and activity upon its broad expanse. However attractively the placid waters might invite the fishermen, of the hundreds of white sails which usually here encompassed the land in a large half circle, there were as few to be seen as of merchantmen and packets.

6 The Last Days of a King.

It was easy to perceive that one was looking upon a sea from which some calamity, war or pestilence, or something of a similar nature, must have swept seafaring vessels and ships for the transportation of passengers. Here and there only, moving sluggishly along or lying at anchor, a floating Colossus was seen, from whose fore-deck cannon mouths yawned threateningly, and from whose masts waved Old Jack, the British flag. These ships, although belonging to that nation which was sovereign upon the seas, and composing a part of the navy which rode supreme over all the waters of the globe, and which alone twenty years of fierce war had left unconquered, had, as they lay thus idly by, or crept slowly hither and thither, a doleful, melancholy look, as though they had been set to watch and to act as spies.

They were here to keep guard over the coast of Provence, and especially of Toulon, and belonged to the fleet of the Admiral, Lord Exmouth. As the flight of Joachim Murat from Naples had left them nothing to do, and Wellington had marched from Waterloo to Paris, they were lying here in order to be nearer that city and more convenient to the orders of the Iron Duke, and thus form a part of the iron circle which now, for the second time, was being drawn around conquered France. In addition to this, they had in view the maintenance of a close watch over the coast to prevent anything from stealing out which they did not wish to allow to escape the vengeance of the Bourbons, and, if necessary, to support those barbarous measures which were employed with special energy in the south for the uprooting of Bonapartism. England did not consider it beneath her dignity to render the Bourbons this service, and she

had, notwithstanding her piety and conscientious scruples, to support these measures, although they proceeded in part from the Jesuits and their friend Count d'Artois, afterward Charles the Tenth, and were directed against Protestantism. Of this policy of Castlereagh, Lord Exmouth was a worthy instrument. The blood-thirsty *Verdets*, who took their name from the colors of the Count d'Artois, and who pre-eminently brought the so-called "pale terror" into being, filling the south of France with crimes and murders, regarded, in common with all royalists, and forgetful of all honor and patriotism, these Englishmen as their devoted friends and allies, while the lover of his country turned his eyes away, the more easily to repress a sigh.

Pascal Morin, therefore, felt it a real misfortune that his cottage in the suburbs of Toulon, and which was separated from the briny deep only by the country-road, should be so situated that, as he sat in his old easy-chair, he must needs from his window gaze upon the English ships. To have succumbed to the English by giving up a habit of nearly ten years' standing, and removing his chair from its accustomed place, would have seemed cowardice. He remained, and only sought to aid and divert his mind by making every effort to lose himself in thought and feeling in the old histories of Philip de Comines, and Joinville and the olden time. But when he read of the deeds of renown of the past, he involuntarily glanced out toward the hateful ensigns and masts of Old England, and he felt that the glory and grandeur of France had passed forever. His arm, which had been permanently crippled by a Prussian bullet, and with which he with difficulty turned the leaves of the book, fell as if palsied into his lap, in despair of the

future, or else it was raised stiffly like a staff, in menace toward the sea.

"Monsieur Pascal," now said Margaret Beaujean, the old housekeeper, who, despite the August heat, took her wonted place by the chimney, which of course was without a fire, and which stood in the back part of the large, high room, the coolest corner in it on account of the draught of air it afforded; "Monsieur Pascal," said the good old woman, with a mixture of respect and familiarity, "you are reading a doleful book again."

"A very able one, on the contrary, and so interesting that it would amuse any person who is at all capable of being amused, and—is not a Frenchman."

"Interesting or not, throw it aside, and take a walk; it will do you good; you've not been outside the door for three weeks."

"Go out?" exclaimed Pascal; "I shall have a care as to that."

"You've nothing to fear, I think; every one knows that you were never a Bonapartist, and you were not afraid to make a public avowal of the fact under the empire. You were a genuine republican, and never lacked for bravery from '89 to '93; and as matters stand now, it is merely the partisans of the emperor who are being brought to trial, and not those of the republic."

"It is not that," replied Pascal, in a vexed tone, with a gesture of his stiff arm as if in deprecation of an affront. "You should know me better, old Margaret. I am not afraid of the fellows who are courageous just at this time, because they have a million foreign soldiers to back them. I do not go out, because I dread to hear of fresh deeds of baseness, new treachery, and further

murders; this it is, and this only, that Pascal Morin fears."

"Very well; I understand that very well," the old woman assured him; "and I beg pardon for supposing that a volunteer of '93 could be afraid of these hirelings of *ci devants* and emigrants; but you need fresh air, and you ought not to be forever looking at the accursed English; go off by yourself into the vineyard; the vines are now so high that you can see no one, and no one can see you."

"But, Margaret," exclaimed the old soldier of '93, in surprise, and added in a subdued tone of voice: "How can you suppose that I would leave the house now, even for a moment? Have you forgotten whom we have here? Are you sure that this very hour even, I may not be obliged to seize my arms in order to——"

"That's true," said the old woman, interrupting him. "Don't go one step outside the house, for heaven's sake! I should die with terror."

"Very well," said Pascal, casting his eye up toward an old musket which hung against the wall.

Margaret murmured something to herself; then, however, she rose with a determined air, drew a few steps nearer her master, and throwing her sewing-work upon the table in the middle of the apartment, said in a strong and yet subdued voice, as though meant to be heard by him only: "It is not quite as bad as that, M. Pascal; I assure you, it is not quite as bad as that; I am not as cowardly as I pretend to be. I give you my word, they need only to come: the moment I see that they're on the track, I'd seize that musket myself, shoot two of them, and knock the rest dead with the stock. When I think how he came in here imploring succor, I have

the strength of a lioness. I shall never forget it as long as I live; and I am glad that you were not by, for it would have wrung your heart your whole life long. Such a man to be begging a crust of bread! Such a soldier, who had not feared death upon a hundred battle-fields! I could but notice how anxiously he looked around, and gazed into my eyes to see whether treachery lurked there or not. And then when I set eggs before him, how he ate!—Heaven forgive me,—he didn't eat, he devoured! And how pale he looked, handsome man that he is! And then when you came in, what new anxiety his countenance expressed; and when you drew the coin from your pocket and laid it upon the table before him, and he saw there his own likeness and knew that you had recognized him, and observed with so much anxiety and solicitude the glances which you and I exchanged, as if to ask, 'Will you betray me?'—O heavens! I shall never, never forget it! I wouldn't have betrayed him, had he been Louis Capet himself, not if they'd guillotined me a hundred times!"

"You are a good woman," said Pascal, rising and gently patting her old and wrinkled cheeks. "You are a good woman; but be quiet, and do not talk about it; walls have ears. All France swarms with informers and spies."

"You're right, I'll be quiet; but only tell me this one thing that I cannot explain. How could Drouet, the postmaster, ever stop Louis Capet when he was flying, and deliver him up? Drouet was a republican, was he not?"

"That was a different thing," said Pascal, by way of explanation. "Louis Capet had not asked succor, nor was he his guest. But now hush, I beg. I hear

steps approaching,—many and heavy ones,—they may be coming directly here.”

The old republican and his housekeeper held their breath and listened, involuntarily looking out toward the road. Steps were indeed heard approaching nearer and nearer with heavy measured tread, seeming the more likely to belong to a body of armed men, as with the monotonous sound was unmistakably mingled the rattle of iron. Margaret whispered, “Quiet is the word! Pretend, Pascal, that you are busy reading.”

“It is unnecessary,” said he, as he recognized the steps and clanking sound. “It is the prisoners from the galleys, returning from the quarries.”

“Then Heaven and our Lady be praised!” exclaimed Margaret. “Only a few hours longer and he——”

“Hush!” ordered Morin.

Meanwhile the galley prisoners drew near in regular file, fastened together two by two, passing close by Morin’s window. They had but one arm free, with which they carried a shovel, spade, and quarrying implements; heavy chains were clanking upon one hand and upon both feet. Soldiers and *gensd’armes* marched both before and behind the file, and a couple of mounted sergeants constantly galloped back and forth on either side. They passed the windows like an evil apparition.

“Did not you notice something, Margaret?” asked Pascal, and repressed a sigh.

“I did indeed,” answered the old woman.

“What was it?”

“I was surprised that the galley prisoners were not singing as they are generally.”

“And what beside?”

“And beside, that the armed guard was at least three times as strong as usual.”

“And what else?”

“And what else? Nothing else, M. Morin.”

“Nothing else!” said Pascal with a shrug. “Nothing else! The principal thing then you failed to notice; did you not remark that more than half of them do not look like forgers, murderers, and dissolute men, but seem like martyrs, noble sufferers, and innocent victims? How long has it been that we have had the Bourbons in the country,—and now already the prisons are filled with republicans, Bonapartists, and Protestants! I tell you, Margaret, that the guillotine of Robespierre was more merciful than this government which has brought back upon us foreign bayonets. Ah, how much blood has been shed in vain, and how many patriots will yet suffer in vain!”

He drew his left hand over his cold head and chafed his brow as if to drive away a rush of painful thoughts, and then with his disabled arm threw up the window to draw a long breath, for which the large room did not seem to afford him air enough. He leaned far outside and gazed on the splendor of the sunset and the magnificence of the gorgeous sea, without perceiving the least beauty. Condemned to a life of inaction twenty years before, by a Prussian bullet, which had crippled his arm, and living here upon his small estate where he had witnessed the republic, the empire, and the return of the Bourbons, and even the short tragedy of the hundred days, and constantly perusing old books, he had imagined himself a kind of philosopher whom, as he fancied, few things could discompose; and yet at this very moment he was looking out toward the sea to conceal from Margaret the convulsive movement of his features, and flattered himself that no eye was upon him, his sole

spectator the splendor of the setting sun of Provence. He gave a searching glance around, and seeing no prying eye near, he hastily raised his sound arm and brushed away the tears in which the smiling heavens were mirrored, and which were shed over the calamities of his native land and the streams of blood which had been spilled in vain.

But how startled the old soldier of the republic was, when simultaneously with the movement, as though it had been a concerted signal, a second person emerged from the thick bushes upon the other side of the road; the pomegranate boughs rustled, and a strange peculiar form darted as quick as a flash, though stooping and with head bent, across the gravel toward his grounds. Upon the instant the door flew open and the same form lay at the feet of Pascal Morin, who had hardly had time to close the window.

Margaret, who was at that moment upon her knees before the hearth, preparing to light the fire for the evening meal, gave utterance to a cry of fear, and was unable to rise; Pascal stood still with upraised arms, as though petrified by amazement. This singular form, however, appearing thus abruptly before one, was well calculated to excite the greatest astonishment. Everything about him was peculiar looking and odd; garb and complexion, as well as style of feature and expression: everything betrayed him to be a child of a foreign and distant clime, and whose situation was a singular one. His limbs were bare to the knee; a plaited shirt, with full sleeves of a material which shone like silk, was tucked into his short, loose trowsers; one end of a white woollen mantle lay upon his right shoulder, while the rest dragged long and wide in folds behind him upon the ground; a

white cloth like a turban enveloped his black hair, which, though short, fell down in thick and luxuriant locks. This oriental garb was covered with dust from head to foot, and torn in many places as though its wearer had been forced to make his way through bushes and briers. His physical constitution and complexion corresponded with his dress. His face, his uncovered breast, his limbs, all were of a dark brown, browner than is often or perhaps ever seen even among the dark sons of Provence; his countenance was without that subdued shade of coloring which marks the children of the north, merely lying like a pale veil above a brown surface. His black eyes shone with more fire and appeared almost literally to burn with an unnatural glow of fever, adding to their wonted lustre. He was a young man of about five and twenty, vigorously and compactly built, tall and well proportioned, and with features and an expression which betrayed at a first glance the open spirit which burned behind and which shone through them; so much the more affecting was the sight as he lay thus abandoned, evidently sick and exhausted, entreating succor.

Margaret was the first to recover speech. "Good heavens! it was just that way that—you know of course what and whom I mean, Pascal—it was just that way that he looked. The man is a fugitive, flying from pursuit; he has eaten nothing for several days."

The stranger nodded assent.

"Well, if that is the case," said Pascal impatiently, "do not waste time in words; you know what you have to do."

"Of course I know, I've had experience. When a man rushes into the house like that nowadays, one knows what it means; the world is full of fugitives and refugees."

So saying, she hastened out, while Pascal raised the stranger, spoke to him and led him to a chair to rest himself. The latter dropped upon the seat and closed his eyes, but only to immediately open them again, and look expectantly toward the door. There they remained riveted until Margaret returned with a waiter covered with plates and dishes. The stranger started at the sight, and even before Margaret had set down the food, he had seized the bread with ferocity, as though he were committing a robbery by force. He devoured it with frightful avidity, while Margaret whispered to her master: "There, it was just like that, that the other one did, except that he turned away so that I shouldn't see him." She then attempted to arrange the food before him in good, housewifely style; but regardless of all order, he seized now the smoked meat and now a bunch of grapes or some dried fruit, whatever, as he stretched out his arm, came to his hand first. After a few minutes, however, it was evident that a feeling of shame that he should be thus affording his hosts such a spectacle of ravenous greediness, came over him. A light flush overspread his pale face; he paused a moment in eating, and said, with a pleasing gesture of his hand and a gentle smile: "Pardon me, I have been in constant flight for more than three days, without food or drink." The concluding words seemed to have again aroused his hunger in all its intensity, for he once more turned to his food with renewed avidity, and commenced eating as though to make up for the time he had lost in talking. They were the first words that had passed his lips; they caused surprise by his style and manner of speaking, as well as by the fine, full tone of his voice, but still more by the perfectly pure French accent, which was

singularly opposed to the entirely foreign bearing of the fugitive.

M. Pascal Morin reflected that the man was a person of cultivation, and, in order not to again expose him to a feeling of shame, he turned his eyes away from the man while he ate, and motioned to Margaret to do the same. She did so, but soon once more turned to him, to place wine before him. The stranger thanked her with a light motion of his head, and gently held back her hand.

"Why not?" asked Margaret in surprise; "a little drink can do no harm, and it gives strength. You are worn out."

"I am a Moslem," replied the other, "and the prophet forbids me to drink wine."

Margaret opened her eyes wide. "The prophet?" she repeated, and then exclaimed, almost horrified, "He's a heathen!"

Pascal turned quickly around, and was about to reprove her, when the stranger interrupted him, and mildly said: "No, my good woman, I am not a heathen! My God is yours also; He who causes these grapes to grow before your door is the same Being who gave life to the palm-trees beside my father's house upon the Nile." And turning to Pascal, he pursued: "I do not consider it a great sin to drink wine, but I abide by the custom of my native land, as the only bond which still holds me to the land of my fathers, my native country, which I perhaps shall never see more."

Pascal nodded assent, and began pacing the room back and forth, not without casting an uneasy glance from time to time out the window, or listening in the direction of the road from Toulon. The stranger, however,

did not avail himself of the freedom accorded him to continue his repast; he leaned back in his chair, closed his eyes, and seemed to be collecting his thoughts, like one who has escaped some great danger, and feeling himself in safety, is seeking to convince himself of his delivery. A calm repose rested upon his countenance, shortly before so agitated, so that he appeared to be asleep; and Margaret passed about the room barely upon tip-toe. All at once, however, he opened his eyes again, and said to Pascal: "You do not ask who I am. You are a noble man, and are satisfied with having given me a hospitable reception, and rescued me. But I know who you are, even though unacquainted with your name. Deep sorrow lies depicted upon your countenance, a sorrow which you can only feel for your native land; for the enemy tread your soil in countless numbers, your armies are vanquished, and you are at fierce warfare among yourselves, as though your country were inhabited by two hostile nations, one of which must destroy the other in order to obtain possession of it. And because you are thus sad and grieved at heart, I feel safe beneath your roof, for I am one of the vanquished."

Pascal looked at him questioningly. He continued: "My name is Nadir, and I belong to those Arabs from Egypt, who, at the time that Bonaparte was obliged to quit the country, left their home because they had been firm friends of France, and their lives were no longer safe after the departure of the French. I was ten years of age when we, three hundred in number, embarked and sailed to Marseilles, where the mighty emperor gave us a home and sustenance and his powerful protection."

"Well," asked Pascal in suspense, and with fore-

bodings that a fearful answer awaited him, "how is it with that Egyptian colony?"

The inquiry put an end to Nadir's composure with one blow. He sprang up, and stood erect and powerful. He raised both arms, and lifted his thin hands upward, as if he would grasp the heavens, and instead of making Pascal any reply, he exclaimed: "Woe to the conquerors! Curse the assassins!" His feelings then overcame him, and falling upon the floor with his face against the earth, he lisped as gently and imploringly as he had just cried furiously: "Peace to the sleepers,—peace, peace!" And a stream of tears followed these words, uttered like a pious prayer for the dead.

Pascal clasped his hands in dismay. "What has happened?"

"The most savage barbarity of these barbarous days, the bloodiest crime of this criminal people. May Heaven visit them with hell tortures even here upon the earth, that I may gloat over their sufferings; may Allah kill their children before their eyes and mine; may He give up their wives and daughters a prey to the lust of the stranger, before their eyes and mine. *Amin! Amin! Amin!* May they be crushed by want and disgrace, like grain between the upper and nether millstone! *Amin!* They have murdered their guests who claimed the rites of hospitality, those whom they should have protected, their friends, those who, for their sakes, were lost to their native land, and were wanderers in a foreign clime. They fell without warning like fire and pestilence upon the innocent and defenseless, and massacred every soul, men, women, the aged and children,—all, all! I, the only one perhaps, have escaped!"

He had drawn the upper part of his body erect, but

he now sank again upon the ground, and hid his face in the folds of his mantle. There he lay almost like a dead man. Rage and thirst for revenge seemed quickly to have spent themselves, and given place to silent grief. Pascal, on the contrary, now acted like a man reduced to desperation, for he paced the apartment back and forth, and wrung his hands, crying again and again: "It is all over with France! Shame, shame! Shame and treachery alone is ours! O, *la belle France!*" he laughed in scorn. "*La belle France!*"

Margaret, meanwhile, stood motionless before Nadir, looking at him as though she had not the slightest comprehension of the state of things. When he again moved and let the mantle fall from his pale countenance, to heave a deep sigh, it seemed to her as though she had just awakened from a dream, and she asked: "But why, why did they do such a horrible deed?"

"Why?" demanded Nadir, in reply. "Because the poor people loved Bonaparte—perhaps simply because they found pleasure in blood."

Nadir arose and seated himself in the most obscure corner of the room. The old republican soldier paced silently back and forth. Margaret removed the cups and dishes from the table without the slightest noise, as though she feared to break the silence. A deathlike stillness thus suddenly reigned where grief and despair had raged shortly before. Nadir was the first to speak. He rose, placed himself before Pascal, and said: "You are different from those people; you remind me of the heroes who came to Egypt with Bonaparte and Kleber, and who were like the heroes of ancient times. You have refreshed me after three days of flight and hunger. May Heaven bless your home, however you may now an-

swer me; and God bless you also, old mother, for your eyes shone with pleasure as you gave me food. Tell me whether you will harbor me here, whether I may seek repose beneath your roof?"

"Of course, of course!" replied Margaret officiously.

But Pascal interrupted her. "No, my friend," he hastily said, "not to-day! Look out some place of concealment for this night; early to-morrow morning you may come again, and you shall be welcome. But not to-day! The pursuers may perhaps track you to my house, and—for this night only—may a kind Providence keep them far from my door."

"By all means!" stammered Margaret, in confusion.

Nadir fixed his piercing eyes upon them both. "You already have one fugitive concealed," he said, "and therefore you are right. I see that it is compassion, and not the lack of it, which leads you to send me away. Heaven save me from putting his pursuers upon the track of a fugitive. Farewell! I shall flee further, but not too far away, that I may be near you in case you, and perhaps *he* too, should need my help. One word more! If it is *he* whom you have hidden, be upon your guard. The whole coast, every house, every cottage, every garden, vineyard, and cave will be hunted through and through by the emissaries of the government, as well as by miserable wretches who seek to make forty-eight thousand francs. That sum, though you may not yet know it, is set upon his head. Farewell!"

With an inaudible step he quitted the room, threw the mantle under his arm and around his frame, like a broad girdle, turned to the left around the corner of the house, resumed his stooping gait, and disappeared among the vine-clad hills, to whose white surface his white man-

tle and turban would have afforded little contrast, even had not the boughs shielded him from view.

Margaret watched him through a small back window, but her eyes did not follow him long, but remained fixed upon a large wooden shed, within which a numerous flock of poultry made themselves audible, and which terminated in the back board partition against the steep hillside, from which the boughs fell in thick and dense foliage, covering half of the small wooden building. She could hardly turn her eyes away from this unattractive-looking object, and gazed at it with a sympathy which betrayed more than a housewife's interest in the poultry. Pascal, however, impatiently ordered her to return into the room.

"I think," said she in a low tone, "it will soon be time to take him something to eat."

"No, not to-day!" he said abruptly. "You heard what the Arab told us. They may break into the house at any moment."

He then turned again to the window, and watched the sun, which seemed to him, to-day, to set much too slowly.

CHAPTER II.

THE OFFICERS.

It was still early evening when the premises of Pascal Morin were suddenly thronged with people on foot and on horseback, some in uniform, and some without. Those on horseback had not yet dismounted, but the sitting-room was already filled with those who had come on foot, and the whole house was surrounded. The former planted themselves before all the doors and entrances, while the latter, without even stopping to salute the inmates, ran hither and thither looking with prying greedy eyes, like bloodhounds, into every corner and behind every article of furniture. A couple of men forced Pascal and Margaret to seat themselves on a bench in the corner, and forbade them to stir from the spot. A moment afterward they heard the men rattling noisily around, above them, under the roof. The ceiling shook beneath their tread, pieces of furniture were overturned and broken open, curses and imprecations meanwhile resounding on all sides, as corners and closets and every nook that could serve as a place of concealment were examined and explored without revealing the object of their search. This abominable search was in full progress, making it seem as though the dwelling were filled with barbarous and plundering foes, when a man entered, wearing a ribbon in his buttonhole and followed by two other men decorated with white scarfs. This person wore

lightly powdered hair beneath a small three-cornered hat, with which the cut of his loose dress coat, his short stockings, and the huge silver buckles in his shoes, well accorded. His dress closely resembled the style in vogue previous to the revolution, although his age forbade the belief that he retained this garb from youthful habit, for it had long since fallen into disuse in France.

He approached Pascal and said, by way of introduction, "I am the Marquis von Rivière, the prefect of Marseilles."

"I have the honor of knowing you, Marquis," replied Pascal with a slight bow.

"You know me?" demanded the Marquis in surprise. "I have, however, been in this part of the country but a short time."

"We are old acquaintances," Pascal asserted in reply.

The Marquis was somewhat embarrassed, but soon collected himself and said with a smile: "So much the better, for then, being an old acquaintance, you will the more heartily aid me in the discharge of my duty. We are in search of Joachim Murat. It is the expressed will of his Majesty, Louis Eighteenth, our king, that this usurper of Naples and brother-in-law of the tyrant, shall be arrested. It is certain that he has entered into communication with a large number of the inhabitants of this region, and that his presence may endanger the peace and order of this department, for which I am responsible. Only a few days ago he was wandering about here upon the seacoast, and he went out in a small boat and hailed a brig, requesting it to take him up. The brig refused to do so and he returned to the land. A worn out, and famished man was seen wandering here among the vineyards, who, according to the description

and accounts of the country people who have been questioned, can be no other than Joachim Murat. The treasures and jewels which he has with him are worth obtaining and sharing among those who aid in giving him up into the hands of his majesty."

The Marquis paused a moment and waited for Pascal's reply: as none came, he leaned toward him and to his previous remarks added, in a low tone: "Forty-eight thousand francs will be given to the person who delivers him up, or renders especial service in his arrest."

Pascal's lips were still motionless, and his countenance continued without the least expression. A dark cloud passed over the Marquis's brow and was upon the point of becoming threatening; it, however, soon disappeared and gave place to an amiable, flattering smile. He again commenced:

"You say that we are old friends—when did we make each other's acquaintance?"

"Years ago."

"Years ago?" asked the Marquis intently. "And where?"

"At Grenoble," quietly replied Pascal. "In consequence of the part you had in Cadoudal's conspiracy against the emperor, you were condemned to death and were already at the place of execution. I was present. You were pardoned by request of Queen Caroline, the wife of Joachim Murat, as well as by that of the king himself."

The Marquis started and his hand was clinched. He made a faint movement as though to turn away from Pascal, evidently with a view of giving some order; but he collected himself, and again addressed Pascal, saying:

"It is very true that the king and queen of Naples

saved my life; I feel grateful for it and wish to render Joachim Murat a similar service. Once taken, he is safe, but thus wandering around he may fall into the hands of the populace and be murdered, like Marshal Brune."

"Marshal Brune murdered!" exclaimed Pascal, in dismay.

"Day before yesterday at Avignon," said the Marquis. "He was murdered by a furious mob. Murat must inevitably meet the same fate, if we do not succeed in taking him. Whoever surrenders him up to us, is his savior."

The Marquis again waited in vain for an answer; he now thought fit to dissemble no longer; he turned to his men and ordered them to make a thorough search through the house, court-yard, and garden. Then looking over his shoulder at Pascal, he exclaimed in a tone of menace:

"Any man who conceals Joachim Murat, or even knows his hiding-place, without giving him up to the authorities, will be sent without further words to the galleys, as being guilty of high treason. It is not far from here to Toulon, M. Morin."

Pascal merely nodded assent.

While this conversation was in progress, the two men with white sashes, both of them police commissioners from Toulon, had been subjecting old Margaret to an examination. One of them ordered her to swear by *Notre Dame de la garde*, that she had no knowledge of the whereabouts of Joachim Murat. It rather shocked her, but she did as she was ordered, hoping to obtain absolution at confession the following Sunday. Then, notwithstanding the oath, the same man told her that if she knew Joachim Murat's place of concealment and

gave him up, she would receive forty-eight thousand francs, the amount appropriated by Fouché, the minister, for this patriotic deed.

"Fouché!" exclaimed the old woman in a tone of simplicity; "it is not possible that he is that wicked, deceitful minister of Corsican tyranny!"

"He is now the minister of his Majesty, Louis Eighteenth."

"Impossible!"

"Yet so it is."

"Then it's a pity that I know nothing about Joachim Murat. Forty-eight thousand francs! It would make me comfortable all my life,—but no such good fortune could ever happen to a poor old woman like me. You'll see, M. Commissioner, some rich person will get the money who has least need of it. Minister Fouché would have done better to vow this large amount to our dear lady, *Notre Dame de la garde*, at Marseilles, and then you'd have found Murat, certain."

"And," continued the commissioner, "Murat carries an untold number of costly jewels concealed in his clothing, a treasure of immense wealth; half of these will be given to the person who puts us upon his track."

"Ah, you see, M. Commissioner, I don't regret that so much," said Margaret, in a simple-hearted manner; "I care nothing about jewels. I have never worn one all my life, and don't want to commence, now I'm old. People would laugh at me if I started wearing diamonds. Some rich person will get them, too: you remember what I say."

The officer turned away in contempt, and leaving the room, went into the court-yard, where the Marquis and his retinue had already gone: the other officer wearing

the white sash stopped a moment before Margaret and looked in her face in a penetrating manner. A hardly perceptible smile played about his lips, and he then said in a tone which was meant to be threatening, and which yet by a mixture of mildness, betrayed that it was one of warning:

“If we find nothing to-day, we shall return to-morrow,” and then he too went into the court-yard.

History has preserved the name of this man, and preserved it by the pen of one of the finest of historians, Pietro Colettas, the Tacitus of Italy. It was Joliclère. He was the same person who, at an earlier day, when negotiations were being entered into with Joachim Murat, as being in rightful authority, was required to discover his place of retreat, which he refused to do, as the intention was to betray his confidence and have Murat suddenly seized. Joliclère atoned for his fidelity in exile, never repenting what he had done. Yet the man spent his whole life a mere policeman! What temples virtue chooses for her abode!

Meanwhile, house and court-yard were examined still further, and not even the smallest nook was left unsearched. Pascal and his housekeeper were brought outside and placed in the yard, several officers watching their countenances while their subordinates hunted around everywhere, even beating against the massive freestone wall, to chance to discover by the sound, some cavity. The men hoped that they might find out by the expression of their countenances, whether they were near the hiding-place of the fugitive or not. The two old people, however, watched the earnest, excited efforts of the bailiffs, Pascal with quiet dignity, and Margaret with a smile of perfect simplicity. Only when a number of

men approached the hen-house, did Margaret betray any discomposure, when seeing them kick open the door and crowd in, she sprang in violent agitation from her seat, and hurried straight to the hennery.

"You must let my poultry alone!" she cried. "They've nothing to do with your politics, and the king never sent you to catch my hens and turkeys!"

The men laughed, and tried to force her out of the chicken-house; but she stood her ground, and fought the air with her arms, haranguing them meantime in a loud, shrill key, and fortunately succeeded in raising a terrible noise and commotion on the overpopulated hen-roosts; a confusion and disturbance that was positively deafening. The turkeys flew in rage at the intruders, who were soon driven in flight from the chicken-house, though how, they themselves did not know. Margaret, in a state of exhaustion, seated herself at the entrance, prepared, as she assured them, to repel by force any renewed attack upon her darlings. The men treated her and her "darlings" to a sneer, but did not make a second attempt in that direction.

In the south, during the warm summer months, day changes to night almost without a twilight. Suddenly the darkness for which Pascal had been longing came on, and seemed about to put an end to any further search. But the spies had provided themselves with lanterns and torches, which were now quickly lit: and as the stock was insufficient for the large number engaged, they flew to the dry olive-twigs that lay piled up in thin bundles in the court-yard, and dipped them in the oil-cask which stood in a side hall, and thus improvised new lights.

"Now for the vineyard!" ordered Von Rivière, and

directed the men on horseback to go around the hill to the other side. While these were trotting around there, the gang divided themselves off in Pascal's vineyard, where the lights flitted hither and thither like will-o'-the-wisps, lighting up the vines for the benefit of the two old people who had remained behind in the court-yard, but at the same time showing them how the poor plants were being trodden down and abused. Margaret approached her master and started to speak, but he hurriedly laid his hand upon her lips. It was impossible to know whether some spy might not have remained behind, watching them in the darkness; yet he could not help pressing her hand and whispering in her ear, "You have done nobly, my good woman!"

They remained standing there some time, watching the lights, which gradually ascended the hill until they met in one spot, to immediately again disappear.

"Now they are at the cave," said Pascal.

Margaret shrugged her shoulders and said in a contemptuous tone: "Of course, one would be likely to hide himself in a cave that every goat-herd knows about; in that case it would be an easy thing to make forty-eight thousand francs!"

After some time the lights again disappeared on the other side the hill, and now for the first time were the lamps in the house lit, and Pascal went around the farm with a lantern, to be sure that no spy had been left behind, while Margaret did the same under pretense of putting the court-yard to rights. There were no servants at hand, for Pascal had sent them off, three days previously, on various errands to Cannes, Aix, and Marseilles; a part of them to intimate friends who were to detain them as long as possible.

The same quiet as before, increased only by the stillness of the night, reigned in and around Morin's farm; a silence hardly broken by the waves of the sea, which beat against the coast with rather more violence than by day. The darkness was intense, for the stars were hidden by clouds and the moon rose late. This Pascal observed with pleasure, but the violent tossing of the waves he did not well like.

"Just come to the window, Margaret; you were born here, and are a pilot's daughter—tell me what you think of the weather?"

Margaret put her head and hand outside, listened to the beating of the waves, and gazed in every quarter of the heavens.

"Bad," said she, "bad, M. Morin! The night no doubt will be tolerable, but toward morning we shall have a west wind."

"Well, then, it is all right," answered Pascal, at ease; "before morning he will have reached his ship, and the west wind will blow him quickly off the coast of France toward Corsica."

"Then he is going to Corsica?"

"To await the answer of the Emperor of Austria, who has partly promised him an asylum."

"But will he be more secure in Corsica than here? Is not Corsica, too, French?"

"Yes, but the Emperor Napoleon is from that place; the Corsicans will receive him as one of themselves; they are a hospitable people, and if he tells them that he places himself under their protection, he will be safer there than anywhere else in the world."

"But are there not French soldiers there, too?"

"Of course, but not in sufficiently large numbers to

oppose the Corsicans if they wish to protect him; and after all, they are soldiers who stand by the Emperor: The king has thoroughly informed himself as to the whole affair."

"The king!" said Margaret; "you yourself let that word slip, now!"

"The danger seems over," said Pascal, smiling, "or at least promises soon to be. Get ready, Margaret; but be quiet, for fear that we may not hear the concerted signal, for the sea is more noisy than ever."

Pascal drew the table near the window, placed the lamp upon it, and remained himself standing near it, constantly listening, while Margaret was busy in the background, making up a small package of food. She then seated herself, and a long time passed away in perfect silence. Suddenly there came from the water the sound, subdued but perfectly distinct, of the first verse of one of the sailors' songs of Provence, pathetically bemoaning the fate of a cabin-boy who goes to the bottom, within sight of his native shore. Pascal and Margaret rose, and the verse was not yet finished, when they both stood in the court-yard and before the hen-house. Margaret pushed the door open, showing a reckless disregard of its inmates which afforded a remarkable contrast to the solicitude that she had manifested toward her *protégées*, when the officers were by. She aroused the sleepers, and with a broom drove them from their retreat; such fowls as, overcome with drowsiness, fell from their roosts, she seized and threw relentlessly after their flying companions. She then, with her broom, swept the floor of the hennery as clean as was possible to do in the haste and precipitancy which her whole manner exhibited. Pascal, meanwhile,

stood near her, with a lantern in his hand, which he so shaded with the skirt of his coat that the light fell only upon the space directly before him, inside the chicken-house. He then passed his disengaged hand over a board in the back partition and drew out a few projecting nails, and half the partition fell out toward him. Margaret picked it up and laid it quietly upon the ground. A small hollow discovered itself to them in the stone-wall, against which the hen-house was built, and from which the vines fell over the building; it was one of those caves which are known in science as *lithotomi cavi*, and which are often found in calcareous mountain districts, having served as places of retreat and concealment for the persecuted Protestants during the times of the dragonnade carried on against the Calvinists.

Before Margaret and Pascal there stood, smiling, a tall, handsome man, whose long, brown locks fell over his shoulders, and together with his mild though earnest black eyes, afforded a slight contrast to his black moustaches and the thoroughly military appearance of this surprising, peculiar, and, on the whole, pleasing person. As he emerged with a firm step from his hiding-place, Margaret involuntarily assumed a stooping posture, as though in profoundest reverence, and Pascal himself remained standing before him with a respectful air.

"Well, my hosts," said the singular-looking man, "to-day, matters were really in earnest. One thin plank separated me from disgrace and perhaps from death. I heard everything: the stormy confusion in the house, the curses which were launched against me,—and, too, your brave defense of the chicken-house, my good Margaret."

He spoke in a loud tone, as though there were no

prying eye to fear, and with a calmness and composure that seemed to ignore the necessity of haste. Pascal asked him to come into the house, and informed him that he had heard the signal agreed upon, and that all was ready for his departure. Joachim Murat did not allow himself to be incommoded by this. Having reached the sitting-room, he took the lantern from his host's hand, let the light fall upon Margaret's face, and said, placing one hand upon her shoulder: "I want to fasten that countenance in my memory for all time. Candidly, M. Pascal, you are my host, a stranger who has afforded me hospitality; to you I owe my thanks for my escape, and perhaps for even yet the attainment of prosperity and power,—but you are a man. To this good old woman I feel under incomparably greater obligations than to yourself."

"Your Majesty is right," assented Pascal.

"You must have been handsome once, my worthy Margaret," continued Murat. "Your eyes have even yet a pleasing brilliancy, and those dimples in your cheeks were, no doubt, captivating. And you were never married? How comes that? I should much like to know your history."

"Your Majesty——" stammered Margaret bashfully, and a girlish blush suffused her aged features.

"Should I ever become king once more, then, Margaret, I will not forget you. Ah! how my Caroline would watch over and care for you! Could I do something for you even now—here, take this small casket, there is enough in it to make you rich; there, take it."

With these words, he drew from out the folds of the woolen blouse which he wore beneath his mantle, a small

chatouille, and was about to thrust it into Margaret's hands; but she hastily retreated a step, and exclaimed, "Heaven forefend! Cease, Sire, I entreat! I will not take it!"

As the exclamation was uttered in a tone of reproach, he drew the proffered gift quickly back.

"Pardon me, my worthy Margaret," said he, "you see that I was too long a king, and consequently imagine that every kindness must be paid for. Pardon me. And now, what have I to do?"

"The boat is waiting for you, Sire," said Pascal, interrupting him. "Your ship, which is to take you aboard at sea, must set sail this very hour. There is no time to be lost—everything is planned to a minute. You must be aboard and out at sea before the moon rises, otherwise you will not escape the English. You must away, Sire, and at once."

"Then forward, and without delay!" exclaimed Murat; "for we go to meet the foe. I will not take leave of you, for I shall see you again. Forward!"

He walked toward the door as though advancing to battle. Pascal hastened before him to lead the way, and Margaret brought up the rear with a small package, filled with provisions. After going some distance along the country road, they turned to the left, and walked to the foot of a small hill, toward a creek. They passed a few houses on the way, in which lights were still burning, and whose occupants were still awake. Notwithstanding this, Joachim Murat attempted several times to enter into conversation, but Pascal took the liberty to impose silence by a low "Hist!" To persuade him to tread more lightly was impossible, and his footsteps were distinctly audible as he passed along. They, however,

arrived at the creek and the place agreed upon, in safety.

“Jaquet!” cried Pascal.

“Here!” replied a voice, and the person called immediately sprang from a skiff, which he drew by a chain as near as possible to land.

“Hasten into the boat, and away,” whispered Pascal to the king; “I heard steps and a noise behind us.”

“Adieu and *au revoir*!” exclaimed Murat, and sprang into the skiff.

“Well,” said Pascal to Jaquet, “why do not you go aboard?”

“I? I am not going!” replied the sailor.

“Traitor! what does that mean? Are you not paid for taking the king to the *Themis*?” exclaimed Pascal in anger and dismay.

“Paid?” replied the other. “I have done enough for two hundred francs; if it were known that I was in the plot, I should be sent to the galleys. I am no traitor; if I were, I might have earned a larger sum. And the *Themis*? Well, first let’s see where the king is to meet her.”

“The *Themis*,” Pascal informed him, “is the king’s ship; it must be waiting for him at sea.”

“I know much better than that,” said Jaquet. “We’ll wait for it first. I fancy his Majesty will be obliged to make the voyage to Corsica in a row boat.”

“Idle prating!” exclaimed Murat. “Villain! will you get into the boat or not?”

He received no answer; with a bound, Jaquet had disappeared over the hill and behind it, into the night.

Margaret clasped her hands. “Good heavens! what is to become of the king now?” she cried in despair.

"My arm, my crippled arm!" exclaimed Pascal. "I cannot row you, Sire!"

"Never mind, my friends," said Murat, consoling them, "I can row very well myself, until I fall in with the Themis."

He seated himself and grasped the oar, when some one bounded in after him, and so violently, that the boat shook.

"Is it you, Pascal, jumping into the boat?" demanded the king.

"No, Sire, I am here upon the land. Is any one in the boat?"

"We are lost!" exclaimed Margaret.

"It is I, M. Morin!" a voice from the boat now cried; "I, Nadir, your guest!"

"The Egyptian!" exclaimed Margaret.

"Tell the king, M. Morin, that he can place confidence in me, that I am a good ferryman, and a fugitive like himself, and that I belong to the race of those who expiated their attachment to the emperor by proscription and death."

"It is so, Sire," exclaimed Pascal; "you have a friend aboard."

"My star, my star!" said Murat with fervor, and raised his hat aloft. "Push off, Egyptian, you carry Cæsar and his fortunes!"

And the skiff glided away into the sea and night.

CHAPTER III.

UPON THE HIGH SEAS.

BOISTEROUS waves rocked the frail bark that bore away the two fugitives, two men of so widely different blood and destiny, who had never seen each other face to face, who even at that very moment, when their destinies were so closely united, could not interchange a glance, for the intense darkness. The succor which had met him so suddenly and unexpectedly, inspired the king with confidence, and gave him a feeling of cheerfulness which he was in such a high degree capable of enjoying, and awakened within him a courage which was born with him as with few mortals. He observed with pleasure the skiff, in spite of the high waves, gliding quickly on.

"You ply the oar, Nadir," said he, "as if you were a boatman born."

"I am not, Sire," replied the Egyptian, haughtily. "My father was the prince of our line, but I have, it is true, supported him and my brothers and sisters for years in Marseilles, often acting as boatman and fisherman. I am thoroughly at home in guiding a boat, and I hope to have the good fortune to place your Majesty in safety. But I will be silent; the flame dancing yonder before your eyes, is the light aboard an English ship."

The skiff glided noiselessly on, so noiselessly that one ever so near could not have heard the dipping of

the oars. The ship's light was soon moving behind them.

"Farewell, perfidious England," exclaimed Murat, "who meant to take me in your trap! You will not get me. Do you remember what a trick I played you at Capri also? It was my first act as king of Naples, and by it I gained that fair crown."

At the thought of that truly daring deed by which he commemorated, in brilliant style, the beginning of his rule, Murat smiled, wrapped himself in his mantle, and heedless of the waves which frequently beat over into the boat, he extended himself at full length in the skiff, to dream of days gone by, and think over those to come. He soon, however, fell into a deep sleep, and his dreams carried him back to the hundred battles of the past, to the pomp of his royal castle in Naples, to the bosom of his family, and to the side of Caroline, his talented and faithful wife, to whom now, far away in Austria, no power of second sight could betray the situation and position of her husband.

The king slept and the Arab rowed. Nadir hoisted no sails, partly from fear of the storm which manifested itself more and more in the shape of the dreaded north-west wind, and partly from anxiety lest, by carrying sail, they should be driven by the strong breeze too rapidly out to sea, and too far from the Themis. Midnight had long since passed, the darkness grew dense, the storm drove the thickest clouds asunder, and a few stars here and there looked twinkling out. It was light enough for Nadir's eyes to gaze upon the sleeping king. As he lay thus calmly near, a deep awe penetrated this son of the East. Such composure under such a lot appeared to him impossible, save in a favored being, who looked with

perfect confidence into a lofty future. The son of a small country innkeeper lay before him, a man born in obscurity, whose fortunes had been intimately linked with those of Napoleon, the grandest character of modern times; the son of the people, who had worn two crowns, and who had fought the mightiest battles in Nadir's native land as well as in every country of Europe. Was he not the chosen of Heaven, an instrument in the hand, and, it might be, a favorite in the heart of God? Was it not a silent decree of Heaven that he should meet with succor and fidelity in every time of danger? And from the singular manner in which Nadir had met him, was it not written in the book of fate that he should follow and cling to him, without questioning, just as he was now acting as ferryman and pilot, without having seen his face?

With renewed energy he grasped the oars, which he had dropped in fatigue, and, for the morning twilight had already dawned upon the sea, gazed with his piercing eyes far out after the ship which bore the treasures, papers, and friends of the flying king, and which was to receive the latter himself on board. Suddenly a ray of sunshine beamed over the vast expanse of water, and at the same moment, lit up by the sunbeam, a corvette danced, apparently, directly before Nadir's eyes. He jumped bounding up, and hailed the ship, which could not hear him. The king awoke, followed the eyes and movements of Nadir, and quietly said, "It is they! Do not fatigue yourself, my friend; as soon as it grows a little lighter, they will see us, for they are keeping a careful lookout in all directions, and they will bear down to us."

Nadir, however, did not give up, but now rose to make

signals, letting his white mantle wave in the breeze, and now sitting down again and rowing, as the ship, notwithstanding all his signals, kept its course. Fortunately at daybreak, the wind began to blow so strong from the northwest, that the *Themis* was obliged to reef her sails to give the wind as little brace as possible, and although blown violently up and down, she made but very slow progress.

"See," said the king, "they have stopped to ascertain to a certainty whether we are the persons whom they are looking for or not!"

But Nadir shook his head. The conduct of the crew of the ship did not seem to him to have confirmed such a supposition; had they intended to bear down to the skiff, they would have given them some signal that they had seen them, and notwithstanding the heavy wind, they could have set the topsail, and thus reach the boat in a few minutes. It might be, however, that the fugitives on board the *Themis* were unskillful seamen, and as none but those who could be trusted, could be employed to man the vessel, they might have been obliged to ship inexperienced hands. Thus thinking, he inquired of the king in reference to it, in order to allay a suspicion which was fearfully excited in his mind.

"How," exclaimed the king with a laugh, "unskillful seamen, inexperienced hands? Blancard, Langlade, Donnadiou, three very able naval officers, are on board."

"Then," answered Nadir in anxiety, "then, your Majesty, I cannot understand the behavior of the corvette."

"The enigma will be explained—let us but steer for the ship."

Nadir exerted his strength to the utmost; the skiff flew on as if he had at that moment first taken the oars

in an unwearied hand; the space between the boat and the Themis grew shorter and shorter. The king stood up and beckoned, and there could be no doubt that those in the ship had noticed them. All was animation on board, and sailors and officers were running hither and thither.

"There is something unusual going on, on board," said Nadir. "There is not the proper order."

"A leak, perhaps," said the king.

"Hardly, your Majesty, for all the hands are on deck. And, too, there is no appearance of the launching of a boat nor the letting down of a ladder."

"Silence!" ordered the king, and he knit his brows while he folded his arms like one who is awaiting what is about to happen. After a little time he said: "I recognize them already. There is Bonafoux my nephew, who has just run over the reardeck,—he has disappeared—does he wish to hide from me?"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Nadir; "what does it mean? They're setting all their sails!"

A few more powerful strokes of the oar and they were but a few yards from the ship. The king stood looking at the vessel in silence. All at once, with all sails set, it bounded like a steed that, with a single leap, prepares for the race, and then throwing itself upon its side, it darted forward like a vulture, with outspread pinions. An officer was heard to issue an order only intended to give the flying Themis still greater speed.

"Rosetti! Rocca-Romana!" exclaimed the king. "Treachery, treachery! They are betraying me! I am lost!"

He threw himself upon the bottom of the boat and on the same spot where half the night, through the raging

of wind and wave, he had slumbered in peace with happy dreams, and where the sun, now breaking through cloud and mist, cast its brilliant radiance upon him and upon the waters, on that spot he now lay abandoned, despairing, and undone, and filled with a dismay such as never before, with his courage, which had never failed him upon a hundred fields of battle, completely gone. There in sadness lay the Achilles of the grand army as he was called, like the Trojan hero when he learned of the death of his friends. The latter had merely lost a friend by death, but the Achilles of the grand army had been betrayed by his friends, and in an unprecedented, sneaking, and villainous manner.

“You whom I raised from the dust, whom I elevated from mere nonentities, and to whom I stood in the place of fate, and who, as long as fortune smiled upon me, worshiped me as a god! Is it possible? Is human nature capable of such a deed? Is not this worse than the cruelty of the wild beast, which only tears and devours its enemy? They run off before my very eyes with my ship, which was to take me to a harbor of safety, with my property, my papers and official documents, and leave me here upon the tempestuous sea, in a wretched bark, exposed to a thousand deaths, and given up as a prize to the officers and pursuers. It is worse than assassination, worse than every deed ever committed by poison or dagger. O King of kings, have I deserved this? Speak!”

With these last words he had sprung up, and raised his face, his eyes, his hands to heaven. He paused a moment, but only to collect himself for the fearful answer, in a fresh and fierce outburst.

“Yes, Father in heaven, I have deserved it. Thou

metest me even measure, for I did a similar deed. When he who gave me my beloved wife and my crown, and to whom I was bound by my whole life and the holiest of ties, was plunged into distress at the battle of Leipsic, I faithlessly deserted him, and sailed away in the ship of my prosperity, before his face, and fled by, like these traitors, with all the treasure with which he had laden my ship of life, and took flight to the camp of the enemy. Thou visitest just judgment. Heaven, I feel thy chastisement in all its power, and know that it is not yet complete. I am a condemned man!"

He dropped like a dead body into the boat, shaking it with the fall. In addition to the quantity of water which already filled it, the waves now beat in. The king paid no heed that nothing but his head, which was resting upon the seat at the boat's side, was out of the water.

Nadir knew that now he must neither listen to the king's lamentations and outbursts of despair, nor reflect upon the fearful treachery of his friends; he knew that he alone was able to think of the danger which was stretching out its greedy hands over the edge of the boat, to clutch the two fugitives. One more heavy wave, and the skiff is filled with water and they are lost. Oars were almost wholly useless, for the overburdened craft obeyed no longer the boatman, but the billows which drove it backward and forward. These usually so placid and busy waters were now deserted, for the state of things upon the southern coast of France had kept merchantmen away; however eagerly Nadir strained his eyes, there was nothing to be seen save the treacherous ship. It was all they had to look to, and therefore notwithstanding the treachery, Nadir kept his eyes fixed upon it, in hope. But it flew on, its sails filled by the

hurricane, as if hastening like a murderer to escape from the scene of his crime. Yet see—Nadir's eye gazed fixedly—the jolly-boat is lowered, a boat has put off. Do they repent? No, the Themis pursued its course, but the shallop was indeed making its way toward the king; three men guided it with vigor and skill; they made the stormy waves obey them, and it seemed as though the tempest which was striving against them, became their servant. But might not the three men in the shallop be also traitors, commissioned assassins, who sought to sink with the frail craft the witness and victim of their crime, in the depths of the sea? One single blow, indeed, of their strong and deep boat, and the king and his pilot are buried beneath the waters. Nadir dropped one oar and stood up waving the other in the air, like a weapon, resolved not to yield up his life and that of the king, without a struggle. There would, however, be greater hope of success if the Achilles of the grand army should take part in the combat; it might then be even possible to obtain possession of the enemy's boat, and in that, thought Nadir, he would surely pilot the unhappy king to some friendly, though ever so distant shore. He therefore cried out: "Up, your Majesty, a combat is before us!"

The king, however, did not stir. Nadir repeatedly endeavored to arouse him from his deep depression, but in vain. So he stood there alone, with the oar upon his shoulder, anxiously anticipating the next few minutes, and hoping that if the worst ensued, the conflict might awaken the king. He took comfort from the fact that the Themis was sailing farther and farther away while the yawl came nearer and nearer, thus constantly increasing the distance between the two. If the traitors

in the Themis were in league with the three men in the shallop, they would wait for them. The inference was correct; the three men already beckoned to them and hailed them in the distance, and from time to time swung their hats in the air; they shouted also, but their voices were unheard amid the raging of the storm. At last they were so near that each tone could be distinguished, and finally there came distinctly resounding over the billows the cry:

“*Vive Abukir! Vive Marengo! Vive Eylau, Madrid, and Borodino!*”

The names of his victories roused the king-like magic from his stupor, and he bounded up as light as a feather. He stood erect, his eyes flashed, and he threw his dark locks back over his shoulders, and raising both hands to heaven, he cried:

“Langlade, Donnadieu, Blancard, my friends! No, I am not betrayed, my star has not gone down!”

The deathly mask which even yet covered his countenance was torn away as by invisible hands; life, hope, happiness, and triumph beamed in every feature, not as though it were a frail skiff with a crew of three, but a mighty fleet, manned by a countless host able to conquer the world, which was coming to his succor. A man who had risen from obscurity to a throne and to the enjoyment of a world-wide military renown, it was easy for him to look beyond and see in the smallest matters the germ of a brilliant future and grandeur. Nadir, who was not aware of the rapid transitions of his nature and imagination, regarded him with amazement, making him forgetful of the sinking skiff and of the deliverance which was approaching, accompanied by the cries of joy of the king's friends.

All at once the king disappeared from his view; with one strong bound he had reached the shallop; the skiff went under, and Nadir would have sunk with it, had he not been seized by a powerful hand. It was that of the king himself who grasped him by the arm, and with a vigorous pull, lifted him over the side of the shallop. It seemed all a dream as he suddenly found himself in a safe boat, surrounded by friends and men whose faces beamed with happiness, while the king, embracing them all, laughed with pleasure, whereas shortly before all had been sorrow, treachery, and hopelessness. The king hardly noticed what, nevertheless, filled the officers with dismay, namely, that he and Nadir had hardly entered the shallop when the sea yawned open and swallowed up the skiff—and the thought that a moment more and help would have come too late, drew from him not the slightest sign of emotion. He chatted with surprising composure, and inquired after the health of his three friends; it never occurred to him to question them as to the treachery of the Themis; he saw and felt only that he had friends and adherents still. Who could tell how many thousands these adherents might number, yet? Nor did he think to inquire how it was that his friends had left the treacherous vessel in order to come to his rescue and join him. That very moment he could have issued the word of command, “Forward to Naples!” to again conquer his lost kingdom; but Blancard was already seated at the helm, and the shallop steered its course to Corsica.

CHAPTER IV.

VESCOVATO.

CASTAGNICCIA, or the land of chestnuts, is a paradise, a perfect paradise, on a glorious isle of one of the most magnificent corners of the globe, and altogether the sweetest, loveliest, and most enchanting region in the wide world, and yet it is but the shrine that holds the jewel, and this jewel is Vescovato, the principal place of Castagniccia. Fortunate the man who has seen Castagniccia and Vescovato. It was there where Count Buttafuoco—we pass his castle as we sail on—invited that unhappy self-tormentor, Jean Jacques Rousseau. Had that worshiper of nature accepted the invitation, he might have learned to know his divinity more intimately, and his ever-watchful mistrust might have been laid to slumber by the noblest hospitality the world could afford, and his diseased spirit might have healed. Where upon the wide earth can be found more beautiful tranquillity than beneath the shade of these chestnut groves, on the threshold of that ivy-clad monastery and the margin of the rushing brook, and in all the paths and walks which wind up and down among the hills, through luxuriant vine regions and avenues of orange-trees? This paradise is surrounded protectingly by high mountains, encircled as if by celestial sentinels; but that it may lack no heavenly charm of earth, these mountains separate in the west, and the eye wanders free over the happy valley of the Golo, and

over the deep blue sea, across the island to the coast of Italy. Happy, thrice happy, he who wanders here as the evening shades begin to fall, and whose breast the little bell of the ivy-clad convent, as it rings for the *Ava Maria*, in addition to the tranquillity of nature, fills with a still higher peace. It is a peace which all the recollections of the many deeds and personages of this historical spot of the war-renowned island do not disturb, but rather increase, for those who fought here were lofty heroes, and the conflicts waged were sacred ones, struggles for the highest possessions of mankind,—liberty and the fatherland. Every house and cottage has a tale of its own to tell; in every house men were living who had either performed deeds of prowess themselves, or who could give true relations of such deeds. Men of most noble character had been born or had lived in Vescovato, and this was the abode of their most eminent chroniclers and historians.

Look, for example, at that house which lies a little apart from the other dwellings of Vescovato, with two stories projecting one above the other, surrounded by a luxuriant growth of trees, and whose deep quiet is only broken by the murmur of the brook and the cooing of the doves which fly round it in countless numbers; that is the house of the Ceccaldi; beneath its roof were born Ceccaldi, the Corsican historian, and Andrea Colonna Ceccaldi, the great general, who shared the Triumvirate with Gaffori and Hyacinth Paoli, the great father of a greater son, Pasquale Paoli. This house stands, so to speak, upon the further side of Corsican history; the greater number of the heroes of this heroic island during many centuries have been sheltered here; how often have deliberations here been held over the man-

agement of the wars with Genoa, its hereditary foe, covetous, cruel, and blood-thirsty Genoa! A sacred halo rests upon this house, for it is also a temple of hospitality; it has ever been a hiding-place for hundreds and hundreds of refugees and fugitives, and is celebrated for its hospitality even in Corsica, that most hospitable of all lands.

Deep stillness and tranquillity rested, with the glow of an August sun, upon this house and upon all Vescovato on St. Louis's day. In the large apartment on the lower floor, which, on the summer side, was protected by shutters from excessive light, were assembled the occupants and heads of the house, in a partial twilight; but notwithstanding the powerful heat, they were not taking a *siesta*, but, seated at the long, heavy table, were chatting now and then, as the enervating sultriness of the day would allow. At the head was seated the owner and master of the house himself, Colonna Ceccaldi, an old man far advanced in years, whose hair fell in long, thick locks over his shoulders, confirming the truth that Corsica has no bald heads. The other and much younger man who sat near him, it is true, seemed to prove the contrary, for his head had but a scanty covering of brown hair; a closer examination, however, showed that this lack of hair was the result of the wearing, for years, of some heavy covering upon the head, a helmet or some other military hat, and that the light Phrygian cap of the Corsicans might, with the aid of time, restore it to its wonted luxuriance. Its poverty now merely served to expose to view, in all its beauty, the high and noble forehead of the younger, if indeed no longer young, man, and harmonized with the eagle nose, the honest and open eyes, and the heavy military moustache

which covered a kind-looking, smiling, and even effeminate mouth. It was General Franceschetti, the son-in-law of old Colonna Ceccaldi, and husband of his only daughter, Catharine Ceccaldi. His wife sat opposite him, listening to him intently, as though to atone for the lost time, the many years that he had passed away from her side. Although her face and form had a matronly look, and her youth had long been past, she still gazed at him with youthful love, and with eyes which spoke tenderness and admiration. Similarly engaged was Maria Benvenuta, who sat beside him, holding his hand and frequently exchanging sympathetic glances with her mother.

Franceschetti, having received his dismissal from Joachim, his king, had, it is true, now been with his family over a fortnight, but all this time had not sufficed them to gaze upon him and hear him speak. Consequently, notwithstanding the burning heat of the noonday sun, no one had thought of taking a *siesta*; during the hottest hours they seated themselves quietly together, when there ensued a constant flow of questions on the part of his family and answers on the part of the returned soldier, although just at this time the conversation was rather more interrupted. Franceschetti had, indeed, much to relate; having been closely allied, for many years, to the fortunes of Joachim Murat, he had not, since the latter ascended the throne of Naples, returned to the island, although at so short a distance from it, for it was precisely at that time when the new kingdom was to be transformed into a new world, that Murat found the presence of his faithful subject more necessary to him than ever. How much he had passed through, during the last two years, since the time when the king, after

the battle of Leipsic, had sought to guide his star beyond reach of the Emperor's, which was so near its setting, and thus preserve his own from a similar fall, and since the moment that he had entered into negotiations with the allied foes of his brother-in-law, and even endeavored, vacillating hither and thither, to form an alliance with them; and, finally, since the time when the Emperor having left Elba, he attempted to make himself king of Italy, and expiated his irresolution and temerity at Tolentino, where he lost both past and future, and showed himself as faithless to the Emperor as to the allies. Franceschetti had much to relate in reference to the *dénouement* of this tragedy, in which, to its close, he himself had played a prominent part, for he, amid the universal faithlessness and treachery, had stood by his master to the end. His wife and daughter had always preferred a life of retirement at Vescovato to the splendor of the Neapolitan court, where, nevertheless, they might have held a position of distinction among those nearest the throne. Being genuine Corsicans, they loved their native land above all else, but as good daughters of their country, they had no other thought than that their husband and father should be where duty called him, in conflict and danger, as became a warrior. Being completely cut off by the English fleet from communication with the continent, they were often, for months together, without intelligence from him or the mainland. Franceschetti's arrival had almost directly followed the news of the battle of Waterloo, the second overthrow of the empire; the second entrance of the allies into Paris, the overturn of the throne of Naples, and the complete fall of Murat. Of the innumerable events which were crowded, it might be said, within the space of a few days, of the

great and sudden transformation of the whole world, they received the first exact information through him, who, to them, was their most trustworthy messenger. Having grown up accustomed to a simple life, associating, notwithstanding their high rank, with the other inhabitants of Vescovato as with their equals, of animated, *naïve*, and impassioned natures, they were now living it all over again with redoubled eagerness, and as they listened, their hearts and pulses throbbed with a sympathy, a longing for the conflict, and a thirst for revenge which could hardly have been exceeded by that of the actors themselves in the great drama.

Colonna Ceccaldi, the aged grandfather, alone, who had seen Pasquale Paoli in arms and Corsica engaged in the mighty conflict for her freedom, and who had been a witness of the old times in general, and in whose philosophical spirit passion was buried, as it were, beneath deep waters, Ceccaldi, alone, listened to the narration of his noble son-in-law with the composure of a sage. Yet he had never heartily sided with that family on the other side of the mountains on the eastern shore, where Corsica and liberty were not as fervently loved as upon this side, the Bonaparte family, who, while winning the island a great and bloody renown, crushed freedom everywhere, and proved that they had little in common with those Corsicans whose blood ran in the veins of Giaupolo, Sampieri, Gaffori, Paoli, those distinguished men and citizens who loved their kind. He sprang from a period when the Bonapartes stood in light esteem in the island; and what were they now, notwithstanding all their conquests, by the side of the family of Colonna Ceccaldi, which had well known how to defend the island, in triumph, against the Saracens in hoary centuries

past? If they found some degree of favor in the eyes of the old nobility, they owed it all to the circumstance that the great Pasquale Paoli had thought Charles Bonaparte of Ajaccio, the father of the future emperor, worthy of a certain amount of friendship. Besides, he very well remembered the time when the youthful Napoleon Bonaparte loomed up as a zealous republican, and his heart, which was as steadfast as a mountain, could never be drawn toward one who had shown himself so inconstant, that from being a defender of liberty, he had become its greatest oppressor and a universal tyrant. As he made no concealment of his opinions and of his disaffection toward Napoleon, and as he had an aversion to the French republic at the time it flourished, a government which deprived Corsica of its conquered freedom, and which had the audacity to drive Pasquale Paoli from its soil and force him to die in exile, old Colonna Ceccaldi passed on the island as a royalist. The female portion of the house, Catharine and her daughter Maria Benvenuta, were pure Corsicans; their affections clung to Corsica, and to Corsica only, and they possessed in an eminent degree all the virtues of the women of that island; they loved liberty, the vanquished and oppressed. Franceschetti was devoted to the man whose brother in arms he had been, and to whom he had sworn allegiance, and thus the little circle was divided into three parties, and this for the simple reason that they were, all four, thorough Corsicans. From that very cause, however, the family tie was so strong that this difference did not produce the slightest rupture, least of all now, when all their feelings were for the dethroned monarch, upon whom had fallen, with all its weight, a judgment which had shaken the world.

To-day a report had spread through Vescovato, that a ship had been overtaken in the vicinity of Bastia by the English, who had pursued, examined it, and then set it at liberty. The little circle was busy with the inquiry who they were, who had been thus pursued.

"I feel easy," said Franceschetti, "it has nothing to do with King Joachim. I know that Maceroni, his agent, is treating with the allies in Paris, and that he himself is negotiating with the Emperor Francis of Austria, in regard to an asylum, and that the stipulations have been agreed to, as during the late war, King Joachim, thanks to the hatred of Napoleon, took no active part in it. It was a sad day for the emperor when Murat failed him at Waterloo; he and he alone could have broken up the English *carrés*. No *carré* had ever withstood him. Waterloo would never have been lost, and to-day both would have been seated on their thrones. As matters stand now, however, it is as well for the king, for the allies have no reason to persecute Murat, whom they were even willing, when Napoleon escaped from Elba, to acknowledge as King of Naples. If he is permitted, let him close his days in peace, unlamenting what he has lost, happy in the remembrance of his brilliant deeds, but happier in the pleasure that a true and loving wife and beloved daughter can offer him,—like myself," added the general, after a short pause, giving his wife his hand and his daughter a smile.

"Amen!" said Catharine, with fervor.

"The king is now certainly in Switzerland on his way to Austria, where he has sent his wife, from Naples, under the name of the Countess Lipano. Probably he travels under the same name. It is a transposition of the letters of the word Napoli, a poor, pitiful disguise of past splendors."

“May God and the Holy Virgin,” prayed Catharine, “watch over his peace of mind as well as over the peace of the world! A great tempest which shook the whole earth has subsided,—oh, that it might now be as tranquil and serene as after a storm!”

“A prayer in which every good man will join,” said Colonna Ceccaldi. “I am old and shall soon rest in a peace which cannot be broken, but the young need peace in order to learn what the world has forgotten during the past quarter of a century—namely, that love, calm reflection, and profitable labor can reign upon earth.”

“That,” exclaimed Franceschetti, “should be first acknowledged and desired by the ruling powers, who are now about to decide the fate of the people. If liberty is not given them, peace and love are not to be thought of. The people now look back and remember the time previous to that of the fallen emperor, and the lofty words which then resounded through the world. The Bourbons, above all, should know that they are returning to a country different from the one they left. The manner in which they now begin their government, however, will render war in France and Europe unceasing.”

“Whatever may happen, father,” said Benvenuta imploringly, and with a voice filled with emotion, “you have performed your part in the world, you will remain with us. Your Benvenuta, who has been forced to pass her entire childhood without you, will now learn to know in all its sweetness, the happiness of possessing a father; is it not so?”

“Yes, my dear child,” replied the general with emotion, and pressed a kiss upon her head; “I will remain with you and will not again leave you. Have I not already donned my brown coat of coarse Corsican cloth?”

"It becomes you better than your uniform!" said Benvenuta, hastily interrupting him; "it's a more beautiful dress than all the rich garments the world can afford. To be a Corsican and a Corsican only, is better than all else! Woe to the man who should come to draw you again from home. I would take revenge upon him as one who seeks revenge for a brother's blood!"

Her beautiful black eyes flashed; she passed both hands through her hair, throwing the *mandile*, the head covering worn by the Corsican women, back over her shoulders.

"My true Corsican girl!" smiled Franceschetti as Serafino, the old servant, entered and announced that a stranger was without, who urgently demanded to speak with the general.

"A stranger? Did he give his name?"

"No, he said he could give his name to the general only."

"How does he look?"

Serafino shrugged his shoulders. "It is hard to say, —like a proud and afflicted man; like a nobleman and a beggar."

"He is a fugitive!" exclaimed Catharine, and rose from her seat.

"Then we have made him wait already too long," said Colonna, also rising. "Let us leave the room, for he will discover himself to no one but my son."

The old man supported himself upon the arm of his daughter and accompanied her into an adjoining room. Benvenuta went out by the hall door. Without in the dusky corridor a man was standing, who leaned against the wall and opened his closed eyes as Benvenuta passed him. She started as she met their glance,

and she was obliged to summon all her self-possession to restrain herself from standing and gazing longer in them. What distress and what a singular fire those eyes expressed! Who was he? But as the stranger wished to make himself known only to her father, the sacred claims of hospitality forbade that she should even cast an inquiring look upon him, and fearing that she should violate good manners, she hastened on until she stood beneath the chestnut-trees in the court-yard. She was overcurious to know who the man was, who thus stood in the passage way, like a beggar, and for this very reason she hastened so far away where she could see nothing of him, nor hear the sound of his voice.

His family having left him, the general stood by the table, looking expectantly toward the door. A stranger entered. A cloak hung from his shoulders, a black silk cap covered his head and fell down over his forehead to his eyebrows, quite shading his eyes. A thick, dark, and untrimmed beard covered his face. On his feet he wore the shoes of a common soldier. His whole form was covered with dust, and he looked wearied and exhausted, as though from excessive fatigue in walking.

Franceschetti trembled without knowing why.

The stranger opened his lips and said with a quivering voice: "Will you afford me hospitality, protection? Will you rescue me? Are you loyal? Into your hands I surrender myself."

Instantly the general was lying at the stranger's feet.

"My King!" he exclaimed, with a cry of surprise and grief.

Catharine and Colonna heard the cry in the other apartment; they remained, however, where they were, as

the stranger wished to make himself known to none but Franceschetti. Benvenuta also heard the exclamation that her father uttered. She did not stir from the spot, but involuntarily turned her head toward the window of the lower room, and saw the stranger upon her father's neck.

"It is a friend of father's," she said to herself, and instantly added, but in a whisper, "it is King Joachim!"

She trembled, and it seemed to her as if her heart were about to stand still; her cheeks grew pale and a cold chill passed through every limb. She looked around to see whether everything near—house, yard, and trees—had not become suddenly and greatly changed, for it appeared to her as though some important event had befallen them. "Father," she murmured, "are you to be again taken from us?" She then rose and with her head erect and a hasty step, she passed out the gate of the court-yard. There she remained standing, gazing abroad like a sentinel on patrol. *He* was beneath the paternal roof, he came as a fugitive, imploring protection, and already she stood there as though armed for his defense, and her piercing eyes penetrated the distance, looking over the country and down across the plain of the Golo, into the valleys, and into the shrubbery near by, to see whether some enemy or spy might not be approaching. She hearkened for any rustling in the bushes. Everything, however, was quiet; the inhabitants of Ves-covato were still enjoying their *siesta*, and the very birds were silent beneath the heat of the burning August sun. Naught trembled save the air and Benvenuta's heart.

CHAPTER V.

BENVENUTA.

SHE had not been standing long, when a hedge of oleander and pomegranate bushes at her right began to move, softly and cautiously, but yet so as to be perceptible to her acute senses. She advanced a few steps and fixed her eyes upon the place thus lightly stirred. Behind the rosy oleander blossoms and fiery pomegranate blows, two dark eyes glowed out, eyes such as are seldom to be seen, even in Corsica. She stepped a little farther and exclaimed:

“Stand forth! Who is lurking behind that hedge?”

The hedge opened, and, obedient to the call, a tall, vigorous, but to Benvenuta, unknown form, came forth, which in garb as well as expression and feature, seemed the most striking of any that she had ever seen.

“Who are you?” she harshly asked.

“I have come to seek hospitality and protection at your door.”

These words forbade her asking a second time the stranger’s name; she simply said: “I will announce you to my father.”

“No, do not,” exclaimed the stranger hurriedly; “first tell me whether I am right—tell me whether this is Colonna Ceccaldi’s house?”

“It is the house of Colonna Ceccaldi, my grandfather.”

"Then you are the daughter of Franceschetti, the noble general?"

Benvenuta nodded assent.

"I have made no mistake then, and what I thought, as I watched you from behind the hedge, is correct. You are posted out here, taking a survey of the country, like a sentinel, to see whether any foe or traitor approaches. Then he has already arrived?"

"Who?" demanded Benvenuta.

"You are the daughter of Franceschetti, and I may answer your question without fear of betrayal; your noble countenance, itself, tells me that you cannot be treacherous. Has he been so fortunate as to succeed in passing your threshold? I mean the unhappy king, Joachim Murat?"

Benvenuta started, and thought: "Is it indeed he?" As she delayed answering, the stranger pursued:

"I am Nadir, an Arabian, and his servant. I guided the boat in which he escaped from Toulon. Three faithful friends met us upon the open sea, and we continued the journey in their company. A French ship which we asked to take us aboard, endeavored to sink us; but a second received us in a friendly manner, and we found on board it many fugitives from Marseilles, who recognized the king, and assured him of their fidelity and love. After a thousand dangers, we at last landed with them in Bastia, all under assumed names, for the king had resolved to remain *incognito*. Upon this island, however, thousands are living who have seen him on the battle-field and at court, and hundreds to whom he has shown acts of kindness. The report of the king's presence immediately spread through Bastia; the officers and soldiers of the Bourbons commenced a pursuit sim-

ilar to that which drove the king from Toulon; at the same time, many of the inhabitants made preparations to defend him. In order to prevent fruitless conflict and bloodshed, the king fled, by a very circuitous route, here to your father; I followed him by another way, and many more will soon come after."

"They will all be welcome," said Benvenuta.

"Yet," continued Nadir, "it would be well not to betray the presence of the king, before a sufficiently large number of faithful friends shall have met together who will be able to defend him against any attack from Bastia. The greater part of them will be unable to be here before to-morrow, or the day following, as the king has given commissions to many of them, to which they must attend; but officers and detectives are already upon his track."

"But how shall we be able to distinguish between the true and the treacherous?" asked Benvenuta thoughtfully; "I do not mean yourself—I believe in you. I see off there, among the bushes by the brook, some strange man stealing along; he may be a refugee, but, too, he may be a spy. Go unto the court-yard, Nadir, and keep out of sight near by; you may perhaps recognize the stranger."

Nadir obeyed her, entered the court-yard, and placed himself behind the basin of the cistern.

Benvenuta stood once more alone, motionless, gazing over the country with an apparently unconcerned countenance. It did not escape her that the bushes were bent apart here and there, and shook, though very gently, in one place and then in another, as they were touched by the stranger, who continued to steal nearer and nearer behind the hedge. At last, however, all be-

came quiet, and every trace of him had disappeared. She felt that she must know where he was, and with a few hasty and light steps she stood by the shrubbery from which Nadir had come, just before. There the man, indeed, lay upon the ground, gazing at Ceccaldi's house, through a large opening in the foliage at the bottom of the bushes.

"Who are you, and for what are you watching here?" suddenly exclaimed Benvenuta.

The man started, and stammered out a few incoherent words.

"Why do you start?" she asked, with a frowning brow.

"Ah," stammered the man, "it is easy for an unhappy fugitive to start—whom can he trust?"

"Here, a fugitive may trust every one."

"Oh, certainly—of course, we are, it is true, in Corsica; fugitives here are never betrayed and given up to spies."

He arose and forced his way through the hedge which, until now, had separated him from Benvenuta; he then removed his hat, and with a submissive mien asked:

"Are you General Franceschetti's daughter?"

"I am!" she replied, and retreated a step, with a feeling of repulsion at the man's servility. He, however, followed her, placed himself again as near her as possible, and whispered, with a prying look:

"Will you then tell me whether the king has already arrived at your house?"

"Who are you?" again demanded Benvenuta.

"One of his trusty friends," the stranger whispered, "who has come from Bastia to join him here in Ves-covato."

His manner was in such striking contrast with that of Nadir when saying the same thing that her doubts of the sincerity of the stranger grew still stronger.

"Hearken!" said she in a voice that struck the man with terror, "he who is guilty of lying, and who steals beneath the roof of a Corsican as a traitor, never leaves this island alive; death awaits him."

The stranger trembled through his whole frame; he smiled, however, and attempted to make some reply, but with a single cry, he started back toward the hedge, evidently in flight, when Nadir seized him by the neck like a wild beast, and in a moment plunged his knife into the stranger's breast. Only a feeble cry followed the first terrible one, and a corpse lay at Benvenuta's feet, while the roots of the rhododendrons and pomegranates were sprinkled with his blood. Nadir, who just before had sprung from the well in fearful agitation, as if forced by an invisible power, now stood by in perfect composure; he even smiled as he looked at Benvenuta, who was standing there as calm as himself.

"Was he a traitor?" she asked.

"A traitor and an assassin," replied Nadir; "one of the men who murdered my friends at Marseilles. I recognized him as he stepped out from the shrubbery. I have simply exacted blood for blood."

Benvenuta gave him her hand: "I trust you!"

He grasped it and pressed it to his brow.

"You are not a servant?" she then said.

Nadir smiled: "I am the son of a hereditary prince of Arabia."

She made a gesture of satisfaction, and said: "Come in and take some refreshment. I will send the servants to remove the body."

About sunset, Benvenuta again left the house, this time bearing upon her head one of those water-pots whose shape even yet reminds one of the *amphora* of ancient times. She descended the gentle declivity until she reached the deep spring whose fresh mountain waters flowed in dense streams through the heart of Vescovato; she then ascended the steps, set down her *amphora*, and leaned, waiting, against the well curb. She was the first at the spring. By and by she was joined by other young girls, both younger and older than herself, who did not appear at all surprised to find the general's daughter and the scion of that ancient family, at the well. Benvenuta evidently came there often, perhaps daily. They greeted one another, and chatted away, as if vying with the plashing waters. When, however, one of the young girls who were drawing water raised the full vessel to her head and started to go home, Benvenuta said: "Just wait, I have something to say to you;" and when the person thus addressed replied that her mother would complain, if she remained longer away, Benvenuta answered: "She will not, when you tell her that I delayed you, and why I did so." So that by and by a large troop of young girls, the greater part of the daughters of Vescovato, were met together. Windows were already opened, here and there, to look at the uncommonly large assemblage, and a few mothers even came down, to learn what was passing at the spring. Benvenuta, however, continued silent, while the others indulged in jests to pass away the time. But when any one of them started to leave, Benvenuta called to her to remain, and with really so much earnestness that there was no one there who would not have obeyed her.

At last, without leaving her place or making a move-

ment, and raising her voice no higher than was necessary to make herself heard by the circle, Benvenuta began, in a quiet, simple manner: "Listen to me, Julia, Emily, Vanina, and you Maria and Seraphina, and all my friends, daughters of Vescovato, whose names are stainless! A great day for Vescovato, I think, is sinking to rest behind the mountains—a day which is destined to cover Corsica with glory. When a fugitive knocks at our door, we conceal, nourish, and protect him until he can escape to the Macchia. But what is that? We protect him from a few spies, or some avenger of blood who is pursuing him. But this day has brought to Vescovato a fugitive whom we shall perhaps need to defend against great armies and the whole world. Listen, my friends. Joachim Murat, the King of Naples, is with us; he is pursued by officers, spies, and perhaps assassins."

An exclamation of surprise passed through the assemblage; the young girls, who already had their water pitchers upon their heads, set them down again. Benvenuta continued:

"To-morrow morning, or to-night even, French soldiers will come from Bastia to tear our guest from us. He comes, after having been hunted down for weeks like a wild animal, encountering great dangers from the tempest, hunger, and treachery, to rest awhile beneath the protection of Corsican hospitality. He, however, is not a guest to whom one can say, 'Go out among the wild brushwood, and seek a support there, among the goat-herds.' He must be enabled to rest and take his repose here as long as it pleases him, until he sees fit to pursue further his lofty fortunes. And what have you to do? You are to go home and tell this to your

fathers and brothers, and they, in their turn, are to inform their relatives and guests. That is all. The king will then be safe in Corsica, as Sampiero and Paoli were safe when a price was set upon their noble heads. Go!"

The young girls hurriedly took their pitchers and hastened in all directions, to their houses and cottages.

When Benvenuta returned to her grandfather's dwelling, the sun had set; the windows were all lit up; the servants were clad in their holiday attire, while her father met her wearing a general's uniform, and Catharine, her mother, had weeping eyes.

"My child," said she, kissing Benvenuta's brow, "every hope which smiled so kindly upon us, a few hours ago, is gone. Have you seen your father? He has again assumed the dress of a soldier. Heaven alone knows what events are to follow, and where and how far they will again take him from us. I feel more sad now than ever before, when he has left me; for this time he does not go with one blessed with prosperity, but with one who is plunged into adversity."

"Is not the glory so much the greater, mother?" asked Benvenuta.

"No doubt, my child, but I believe that fate has important events in store for us, and will not leave us unharmed."

"No one can resist the decrees of fate, mother; one can, however, take his place at its side as an ally and companion in arms, and this our duty demands us to do. I do not know the king's intentions, but as long as he is in Corsica, and our guest, we must take him under our protection. Oh, mother, have you looked in his eyes? Who could desert or betray him? My father wished to

present me to him, but I implored him not to do so; he must not know that there is such a person, but I will watch over and protect him. I saw him only an instant, when he entered the house in distress,—that was enough.”

“My child!” exclaimed her mother in dismay, “what do you say? What do I learn?”

“Learn?” asked Benvenuta; “when did I ever conceal anything from my mother? Do I hide my thoughts? Am I a hypocrite?”

“Are you not the bride of Guiseppe Galvini?”

“I may be; you have promised him that I shall be his. But he is in Bastia with the soldiers of Louis XVIII. If he comes with them to-morrow to Vescovato, to seize our guest, if he does not defend him as every Corsican should, he is my *fiancé* no longer!”

“Do you mark the workings of fate, Benvenuta?” asked Catharine, with a quivering voice. “It knocks at our portals and announces itself by the sundering of sacred ties.”

“And knitting other sacred ties more firmly,” calmly replied the daughter. “I only know that I must now act according to the promptings of my heart; the result rests with God. What does grandfather say?”

“He says that he is Syndic of Vescovato, and even if he were not, while the king remains, not a hair of his head must be harmed.”

“See, mother, and yet Colonna Ceccaldi is an adherent of the Bourbons. Distress and the claims of hospitality are paramount to all else.”

Catharine went sighing into the kitchen to look after the repast in preparation for the king. Before the house, however, a remarkable change had taken place. The great square of Vescovato was completely filled with

armed men, for the young girls had hardly returned from the spring, when men with double-barreled guns upon their shoulders emerged from every door. They assembled together and then separated, going singly and by groups out of the town, to a spot which commanded the road to Bastia. Outposts were stationed completely around Vescovato, and watchfires burned upon the solitary hill-tops in every direction, as well as upon the square, where the greater part of the multitude remained assembled. The people of Vescovato meant to make no concealment of the fact that they were turning the place into a camp, to protect the slumbers and repose of the fugitive king. Two men stood, a guard of honor, at the entrance of Colonna's court-yard. All, however, was still around, there was no voice of singing or shouting, and no sound save the crackling of the fire in the center of the square.

Before one of the windows in the upper story of Colonna's house, stood Joachim Murat looking smilingly out. Was it the reflection from the bon-fires, or from his soul which spread so deep and joyous a flush over his cheeks? He gazed at camp life and his heart revived. He was another man once more, and no longer seemed like the beggar who had that afternoon entered the house of him who was to be his future servant, uncertain whether he should be received or not. He then felt that death was gnawing at his heart, for his experience had been a deadly one. The three naval officers who had rescued him upon the high seas, and inspired him with so much hope, had also deserted him when they arrived at Bastia. They were not traitors, and would take no part in the treachery of the Themis, nor allow the king to sink in a leaky skiff, upon

the wide waters; but the adventurous ideas which they had been the means of arousing, were not shared by them. They had no faith in his future, they did not believe that the star of Murat could rise again after the sun of Austerlitz had set forever; they even considered it their duty to desist from everything that could subject the weary world, which stood so in need of peace, to fresh disquiet, and to undeceive Joachim whose departed hopes they had again revived. Content with having rescued him, they declared to him that they intended to leave him, and even though they could not adapt themselves to the new order of things in France, they would withdraw to a life of retirement, and endeavor to save what could yet be saved in France, of the wrecked and noble remains of the revolution. The defection of his three preservers was a death-blow to Murat; but what was that defection now, when having barely made his appearance here, he already saw a host of armed men around him? What hidden germ of the future might rest in this little camp? Are not the Corsicans the bravest nation upon the earth? Have they not in all ages coped with superior armies, even with France herself, whom they repeatedly vanquished? What if they made his cause their own? Napoleon returned from the Island of Elba with a handful of soldiers to conquer France, an empire which he had rendered miserable. He, Murat, had done so much for Naples; he, first, had made it a civilized country and a free one,—would it not advance to meet him? With the Corsican nation in his rear and a grateful people in his van, would it be difficult for him to obtain possession of his land again? Murat began to dream. There was never perhaps, upon the earth, any man who so willingly gazed at

the future in its brightest light, and who so quickly and easily was inspired with courage for the most hazardous undertakings, as this innkeeper's son, at a later day the theological student of Cahors.

In this happy state of mind he would have delighted to pass out among the armed men, well pleased to speak a word to them and infuse into their bosoms a spark of enthusiasm for him and his cause. He could have shown himself to them as a king, for he no longer presented the pitiable appearance he bore when he came that day, but now stood there in all the magnificence of his best days. Franceschetti, who was his adjutant in Naples, had, while others laid aside jewels and money, taken nothing away with him as a souvenir of the king to whom he owed so much, save one of Murat's suits of clothing. When he brought it to the king, it seemed to him as though, with his garments, Franceschetti had given him his rank and the olden, happy time. He hastily put on the rich attire which once was known throughout the whole army, and in which he was recognized by every one. It abounded in gold lace, and upon the table lay the hat with its tall white plume of heron feathers, which had served as a standard upon many a battle-field. The watchfires, too, were burning without. Might not he too believe that he was about to enter upon a new and brilliant career. Fortune does not raise a man to so high a position to tread him again, forever in the dust. Who can be certain that Napoleon will die in captivity? And did not Bernadotte, who on this island labored upon the road like a common soldier, carrying stones and rubbish, stand upon the steps of the Swedish throne to shortly after seat himself upon it, the throne of the renowned Gustavus, the great Gustavus Adolphus, and the hero-hearted Charles the Twelfth?

Murat was disturbed in the midst of his reflections, but in a way that well pleased him. The door flew open and a man lay before him, who, extending his arms, exclaimed: "Dare I embrace the feet of my king?"

Serafino, the old family servant, stood in the door shaking his head; he had vainly endeavored to keep out the intruder; he, however, felt easy, as he saw the king recognize him with joyful surprise, and exclaimed:

"Am I not mistaken? Is it you, my steward?"

"It is," replied the other; "yes, your Majesty, yours until death, your faithful Carabelli!"

At the mention of this name, Serafino again shook his head; he went out, however, feeling it improper, as the king had received the stranger with pleasure as an old acquaintance, to stand longer in the doorway. As he went away, however, he repeatedly murmured, "Carabelli! Carabelli! It is a bad name! The Carabelli are of bad blood!"

Scenes similar to that with Carabelli were repeated many times that afternoon, for Bastia had for several weeks been a place of reunion for many French refugees, who after Napoleon's fall sought to escape from the first rage of the "pale terror," and the number of whom, after the assassination of General Brune at Avignon, and scenes of a similar description, constantly increased. They were joined by those Frenchmen who had served under Murat in Naples, and by Italians, who, suspected of being partisans of Murat, sought to flee from the persecutions of the restored Neapolitan Bourbons. Functionaries and officers of high rank were among these refugees; shortly before powerful and respected, they had now, by the events which had riven the ground beneath their feet, become, so to speak, adventurers.

However much noble blood there was among them, there might, as Serafino affirmed of Carabelli, be much bad and mixed blood, as well. Loitering around in idleness in Bastia as being the place of retreat nearest France and Italy, some of them frivolous and some sad, they were suddenly excited by the report that Murat had landed. The name of Murat was one with the mention of which new undertakings were immediately associated. Those who had not seen him in adversity, were unable to think of him as anything but brilliant, splendid and prosperous. He was the only one who had not disappeared amid the general shipwreck of everything connected with Napoleon, and was the standard around which they could yet rally. The greater number of these refugees had no further losses to fear, and any movement whatever might prove a benefit to them; and thus the men who for years had been soldiers, easily became adventurers. Some few, of course, were actuated by noble motives. Gratitude, loyalty, sympathy, or a thorough scorn of the French Bourbons, as well as those of Naples, drove them to the last representative of the epoch which had witnessed the overthrow of the Bourbons and the old *régime*. They were sufficiently numerous to have soon searched Bastia and convinced themselves that Murat was no longer there; there was therefore no doubt that he should be looked for at Franceschetti's, and hardly an hour after Carabelli's arrival, Colonna Ceccaldi's house was almost overrun by the throngs of functionaries and officers of the deposed emperor and of the fugitive king. Those who visited Murat under such circumstances, uncertain as to his or their own future, were very naturally resolved, either from old habit or from respect for the fallen prince, to treat

him as king. The greater part of them wore their uniform, and it was long before midnight when Murat saw himself surrounded by a large court, and the dreams in which he had previously been indulging in solitude, now began to be realized in a manner that was encouraging in its rapidity of action unexpected, and almost miraculous. An army of volunteers was encamped before the house; as far as the eye could reach watchfires were seen which had been kindled in his defense, and which were already answered by other flaming signals on the high mountain tops and the distant hills. Within the house was a band of brave men which, the day following, would be increased by still greater numbers, and who could not but be supposed to have been led thither by loyalty and a spirit of self-sacrifice, rather than by motives of self-interest. Might not then Murat's heart beat high with hope and his handsome features grow radiant with pleasure? He was as charmingly amiable and full of majesty that evening as he had ever been on his most brilliant days, upon the most brilliant throne of the world.

The throng in his apartments was so great that Carabelli was able to slip out unobserved. He paced slowly up and down before the house, looking in the direction of the road leading from Bastia, and which was partially lit up by the watchfires, with an attention which could be manifested only by a tried friend who was on the alert for the enemy. As he saw upon a part of the road upon which the light fell, a man approaching, wearing the uniform of a Neapolitan captain, he commenced walking more rapidly. To the challenge of the sentinels, the new-comer haughtily replied: "It is Simon Carabelli, captain under his Majesty, Joachim Murat." The guards allowed him to pass, but before he could enter the court,

the waiting Carabelli seized him by the arm and drew him beneath the shade of the chestnut-trees.

"Is it you, brother?" asked the new-comer. "How do matters stand?"

"They are playing court, inside there," replied the other, "but I know Murat but poorly, if he does not soon mean to convert the farce into grave earnest. To be sure, he is constantly speaking of his journey to Austria, and of a quiet private life, and the like, but we very well know how easily his weak head is turned. He can never hold out against 'your Majesty' here, and 'your Majesty' there; his brain will soon be turned. And these precious country people, who have just what knowledge of the world, the waves of the sea have washed ashore on the island, will be blockheads enough to do their part too, in completely turning his head and making him believe that the whole world is ready to lay down their lives for him. You must sacrifice yourself and deny yourself the sight of this comedy; you must go to Naples."

"To Naples? I understand; but before leaving, I would like very much to look in, and see how matters stand there."

"You must not, it is fortunate that I have stopped you before the door. You must never have seen him in Corsica; you must return to Ferdinand, at Naples, unsuspected of and free from any Murat-ism. There, you will therefore remain. I will keep you informed of what passes. You shall receive news by every mail as to the course things take. One side must win. If the man in the house yonder, does, then I shall have been a faithful servant in a period of despondency; and if Ferdinand, then you will have been the first to warn him of the ap-

proaching storm. Besides, there is no doubt how the affair will end; Murat cannot contend with all Europe. So that it will do no harm if you mention me in Naples, as the source of your information."

The captain was not as quick of comprehension as his brother; the latter had therefore much to explain to him, and it was far in the night before he set out upon his return to Bastia. Murat's former steward, like other strangers, went to apply at one of the cottages in Ves-covato for hospitality. He reconsidered the matter, however, and then ascended the mountain and pulled the bell of the Capuchin convent, where the highest officers of Murat's command had procured shelter.

CHAPTER VI.

THE OUTLAWS.

SERAFINO, the old domestic, had at all times been accustomed to confide all his doubts and concerns to Benvenuta; of her, therefore, after having waited for Carabelli at the door of the king, and watched him from a distance until he had disappeared with his brother beneath the chestnut-trees, he went in search.

"Signorina," he then said, "one of the Carabelli has had an interview with the king, and his majesty received him as an intimate friend."

"The king does not know that the Carabelli have bad blood in their veins," she replied; "until now, however, there has been nothing to betray."

"Carabelli," continued the servant, "then had some private conversation with a man in the uniform of a Neapolitan captain, whereupon the latter started in haste toward Bastia."

"It must have been his brother," said Benvenuta, after a moment's thought; "perhaps it would be well if he should not reach Bastia."

Serafino's eyes brightened up. "If you think, Benvenuta, that he has gone to plot treachery, my old limbs are nimble enough to overtake him in the woods between Borgo and Oletta, and my hands are steady enough to aim a rifle straight."

"Do not do so, my good Serafino; you are too old to

draw a *vendetta* upon your head and live in the woods like a bandit."

"Oh," exclaimed Serafino, "if that is all, the Carabelli are cowards, and I should not be obliged to take refuge in the *Macchia* on their account."

"But the Stefani are relatives of theirs, Serafino, and they are no cowards and would not permit the honor of their family to go unrevenged. No, no, you must not think of it. The affair must now be undertaken on a broader scale, on one so broad that all *vendettas* must rest awhile, as during the brilliant period in the history of Corsica, when the freedom and honor of the land were at stake. Corsica must declare herself so powerfully for her guest that there will be no occasion to fear the treachery of single individuals. Serafino," she continued, after reflecting a moment, "will you accompany me upon a dangerous expedition?"

"To the infernal regions, my lady!"

"But no, it will not do, your absence will be noticed. You must remain at home, and if my disappearance is remarked, state that I have gone to pass the night down at Julia's, to get rest, away from the noise. Send the Arabian to me."

"The Arabian?" asked Serafino, in surprise.

"Do you not think him trustworthy?"

"Oh yes, no doubt; he looks like sagacity and honesty itself. But where are you going with him?"

"To the *Macchia*!"

"Holy Mother! And by night! Take me with you, Signorina!"

"Have you forgotten that the man who has already assassinated one of your brothers, is concealed there? No, send me the Arabian; his absence will not be re-

marked, and there is no one bent on taking revenge for blood that has been shed, whom he need to fear. As a foreigner he will be safe."

Serafino made some further objection; but knowing Benvenuta's strong will, he soon went out and sent the Arab to her.

"Nadir," said she, "you see how quickly and willingly my countrymen have taken arms in defense of the king: many brave Frenchmen and Italians who have congregated as refugees at Bastia, have also joined us, but yet the entire force is not sufficiently strong to repel the troops, should they come against the king. Other men of energy and valor must lend their aid to the bravest sons of Corsica, who have proved that they well understand how to annihilate an enemy, and who, beside, hate the soldiers of France as deadly foes. I will see that this aid is procured. But I have a long journey to take, and you shall accompany me."

She went to her room, from which, however, she shortly after returned, wrapped in a light mantle. When she reached the court-yard, she drew up the hood and covered her head and face, exposing to view her black eyes only, which shone out through a small opening. She did not go through the village, but by a long circuitous route behind the houses, until they reached a beaten path, when she still further quickened her pace. Notwithstanding that she moved so rapidly, so light was her footstep that she might have been treading on soft carpeting. Nadir involuntarily assumed a like gait, and moved on quite as noiselessly behind her. It was a clear and lovely night, the full moon had risen and a wide strip of the sea glistened in the distance like a broad sheet of flame. Benvenuta kept, however, as far as possible from the road,

which was illuminated with a silvery light, and went on in the shade of the trees and tall bushes. As she passed the chapels for the dead, on the way, she crossed herself. But for the luxuriant flower world blooming right and left, the many bubbling springs by the roadside, the dashing waters at her right, which wildly foaming, now lost in darkness, and now lustrous with the silvery light of the moon, plunged deep into the ravine and chased the Golo over rocks and trunks of trees,—for all the magnificent scenery of that magnificent country, she had not a glance. On, on she went without stopping, as far as the country looked fair and pleasant. Not until she had reached a point where the path suddenly diverged from the wilderness as if in dismay, did she pause a moment on the very borders of the forest, and then sprung over a ditch to at once disappear in the thick foliage and darkness.

“Here,” said she, “we can rest a little; no one sees us here.”

Nadir looked around and saw a chaos of trees, bushes, and briars; scarlet oaks, albatross and wild myrtle all running together in utter confusion and apparently as impenetrable as a wall.

“Where are we?” he asked, in surprise.

“In the *Macchia*,” replied Benvenuta. “The dense forest begins here, a savage wilderness which the axe of the woodman has never cleared, a primeval forest.”

And she laughed aloud as she spoke.

“Why do you laugh so, Signorina?” asked Nadir, almost startled.

“Because I feel glad. I am glad that there are many such forests in Corsica, for as long as they remain, we are free. What can the French do, with all their bayo-

nets and cannon, against such fortifications as these? Free spirits fly here and find shelter. People call them outlaws. What of that? They are free, and sell their lives dear. Come, there is no time to be lost!"

"But I see no path; do you mean to force your way through this dense brushwood?" anxiously asked Nadir.

"The paths do not anywhere extend as far as the borders of the forest; they commence a long distance in the interior," Benvenuta informed him: "we shall find one."

Nadir took the lead, in order to be the first to press through the brush and make a path for her; his hands and face were bleeding, when Benvenuta at last cried to him: "Come toward the right." He followed her, and found himself indeed in a path where they could proceed with less difficulty; it was, however, narrow and dark, and as densely covered overhead as if it had been an underground passage. After numerous windings, it led to a clearing which appeared sowed, as it were, with huge boulders, and which, in its ascent and descent, approached a high mountain, and was but sparsely covered with bushes. Upon these rocks, in whose fissures all kinds of shrubs were growing, there stood, like specters in the moonlight, large-horned goats and rams, which, bounding and jumping at the approach of the travelers, set the perfectly quiet spot in commotion. Behind one of these masses of rock was a hut of the color of the rock itself, and so deeply hidden that Nadir would not have discovered it, had not Benvenuta stopped before it. It was without windows, and resembled a huge, neglected tomb more than a dwelling for living, human beings. Benvenuta knocked on the wooden door, and immedi-

ately the voice of an old woman was heard within, and on Benvenuta giving her name, the door flew open.

A tall, old woman, with an erect and powerful frame, stepped out, with a brown woolen covering wrapped about her, her gray hair falling in wild disorder about her shoulders; her features, however, were pleasing, and her whole countenance expressed the most joyful surprise.

"Is it you, Madamigella, my child? What brings you here so late? How is your gentle mother?—and your noble grandfather, is he well?"

Benvenuta hastily answered her inquiries, and in order to give the old woman no further opportunity for further effusions of attachment and pleasure, she quite as quickly added:

"Mattea, my dear nurse, I am in haste; I must speak with my foster-brother, your Matteo."

"You have come at just the right time, my child. See, for several weeks I have been obliged to live without him, for the spies were keeping a sharp watch for him, and he was forced to fly to another forest, but now, thank God, he is quiet here, for the detectives, they say, have too much to do in Bastia now, and give the poor outlaws a little breathing space. So my Matteo was able to come back to me. By way of greater precaution, however, he seldom sleeps here. Come, I will take you to him; ordinarily he is at his cousin Cesario's, who returned to the forest only a short time ago. But tell me, who is that singular-looking man who accompanies you?"

"He is a foreigner, and you may trust him."

"As he comes with you, my child, I will trust him with my Matteo's life; that is a matter of course."

The old woman left them and came out again from the hut, a few moments afterward, quite dressed, and ready. She wore a girdle about her waist, a cloth upon her head, and carried a double-barreled gun upon her shoulder.

"Do you, too, go armed?" asked Benvenuta, in surprise.

"Whenever I go to my son, I do," she replied; "perhaps I might come at the very moment when he was hard pressed, and then I could help him. I have relieved him twice, already, and helped him escape from the officers."

They crossed the clearing in the direction of the copse, to the opposite side. The nurse walked along with huge strides, exposing to view beneath her brown garment, which was not closed, and which was held together only by the girdle, her limbs, which were naked above the knee. She had a formidable, terrible look, as, with the rifle upon her shoulder, she thus strode on, by moonlight, over the waste. Living with fugitives and outlaws, whom she had joined in order to be near her son, it had become a habit with her to pass through the copsewood in silence, for silence is the watchword of that wilderness, where more rifle shots are, many a day, heard than words. May not each word betray the outlaw and call up a lurking spy or avenger of blood? A long distance was thus silently passed over, as they went now through bushes, and now over cleared openings, here over a rocky surface, and there over soft turf, until Mattea suddenly stopped in surprise, and gazed at a point where glimmered a feeble light.

"What is it?" said she to herself. "A light in Andrea's hut, and at this hour? Something has happened. The boy upon that rock there is on guard; the outlaws are assembled, and Matteo will be there."

So saying, she advanced with still longer strides, in the direction of the light, while Nadir and Benvenuta followed, until all three stopped before the window of a large hut.

“A *tola*!” exclaimed the old woman in terror, and staggered backward. “Benvenuta, my darling,” said she in a feeble voice, “look in, I have not the courage to—look in, and tell me whether it is Matteo, my child, who is dead?”

Benvenuta drew nearer the window. Upon a table in the room lay the corpse of a young man. The table so used is called the *tola*. The young person thus still in death was wrapped in a shroud, with his head covered with the Corsican *baretto*, which so closely resembles the Phrygian cap. In a kind of chimney a large fire was burning, diffusing a flickering, uncertain light through the room, which gave it a look as though a dark veil were fluttering back and forth in the firelight. It was with difficulty that Benvenuta could fix her eye upon the countenance of the dead man; she did not know him, but she saw that it was not Matteo.

“Be comforted, nurse,” said she, “it is not your son Matteo.”

The old woman whom an instant had served to diminish in stature, and who was leaning, bent over, against the side of the hut, again drew herself up, and said: “Let us enter, then, and see whom we have to mourn.”

As they entered the room, they first saw about ten men seated around upon the ground. Each one had upon his arm his rifle, which the outlaw never lays aside even when he sleeps, and wore around his waist the broad *carechera* girdle, which is always filled with cartridges. The *pellone*, the common Corsican coat, had

been already, for the most part, forced to give place, among these men of the wilderness, to a coarse garment made of goatskin. The comrades thus assembled around the corpse of their companion in adversity, had a very wild, savage look, which grew still fiercer as they rose, at the entrance of the strangers, and cocked their rifles with a simultaneous click, as if at a given signal. They composed themselves, however, and again took their seats in silence, when one among them exclaimed: "It is my mother!"

Matteo was about to hasten to his mother, but she motioned to him to keep his place, and seated herself near the wall upon the ground, placing her arms upon her knees and her head upon her hands. Might not the fate of the dead man be that of her son on the morrow, or even to-day? Of the thousands and tens of thousands who had ever fled to the *Macchia*, to escape the avenger of blood, very few had enjoyed their wild freedom and wretched life during any number of years; after constant flight and unceasing conflict, after a miserable life of disquiet, wretchedness, hunger, and want, they were at last overtaken by the bullet of the avenger or of the spies. The sight of the corpse might well bring such thoughts to the old woman's mind, and she would not therefore show her face or let her faltering voice be heard.

Benvenuta and Nadir also seated themselves, and no sound was heard, save the crackling of the flames.

After a long silence, the old woman asked, as she pointed to the dead man, "Who did it?"

"This bullet here," replied one of the outlaws, "just fits the rifle barrel of Romano of Oletta, the gun with which he shot my uncle in the public market-place in

Bastia. I have cut it from his heart, and have sworn, as a faithful relative, that it shall yet find a resting-place in Romano's bosom."

After a short pause, the same man continued: "Ugone was a brave youth, but he has no mother or sister here, to sing a lament for him; mother, honor him with a *vocero*."

"Do so, mother," urged Matteo; "he was a good fellow, and did us many a service, young as he was."

She cast a sad look at her son, and then, as if suddenly fired, she started up and placed herself in the middle of the room; the men also immediately rose and formed a semicircle about her, facing the deceased. The eyes of the old woman passed back and forth, now in sadness, and now lustrous with a savage fire, from the deceased to her son, until abruptly, and in a shrill voice, she began the *vocero*, that song of woe which is never omitted over a corpse in Corsica, and which, proceeding as it does, *impromptu*, from the grief of the moment, never fails to come fresh from the heart. And thus these laments for the dead have been sung for thousands of years, and many of them are the national songs, and almost the only ones, of these people, these avengers of blood.

VOCERO.

"Millions of leaves fall to the ground,
Millions of flowers yearly.
Death claims his home where life is found,
To life allied so nearly.
The bud he should, however, spare,
Nor youth from hope and pleasure tear.

"Yet mock, O Death, and grimly fill
Thy den with laughter scornful,

But strong as thou, and stronger still,
The flame I fan burns, mournful.
Thou weav'st below thy victims' shrouds.
Revenge soars up and scales the clouds.

“So cold and pale lies beauty's form,
White as thy snowy cover.
Thy soul, I hear the absence mourn
In death, of friend or lover.
A mother's heart—what love so deep?
That heart will for her lost one weep.

“Thy foe at home takes slumber sweet;
May Heaven's fierce curses meet him;
His mother brought him savory meat,
As home he came, to greet him.
Grimly he laughed, nor had he need
Of words, to tell his fiendish deed.

“May Heaven preserve his reason sound,
To warn him day and night
That vengeance, like a fierce bloodhound,
Pursues with venom'd bite.
Were his sleep but simple clothing,
Loathing would I rend it, loathing!

“Slumber not too sound, thou dead one;
Hear the moan I o'er thee make!
Slumber not too sound, beloved one;
Wake at times—awake, awake!
And see with joy the vengeance sweet
Our hands shall to thy murderer mete!

“Aided has my son been, by thee,
When the spies him hard beset;
Had but his mother been beside thee,
She, not thou, had paid death's debt!”

Matteo's mother did not utter this *vocero* in the interrupted manner in which it is written. The outlaws surrounded her, according to ancient custom, as a kind

of chorus, and often broke in, now repeating single words and now entire sentences, especially such as expressed grief for the murdered man, or a demand for vengeance. The chorus was a fearful one, for the outlaws bewailed their comrade in adversity, from the depths of their hearts, seeing in his fate their own destiny; and vengeance was the emotion which inspired them above all else, and which had been the cause of driving the most of them into exile. Mattea was so moved by her own words, that she trembled through her whole frame. When she had finished, she kissed the mouth of the dead man,—even in this, performing the duty of his absent mother or sister,—and then, exhausted and overwhelmed with grief, she crouched down upon the spot which she had left.

The outlaws also were about resuming their places upon the ground, when Benvenuta rose and threw back the hood over her shoulders. Supposing that she, too, would pronounce a lament or *vocero* over the dead, they again formed a semicircle about her, but she said:

“I wish to raise no lament for the dead who has received the honor that was his due, but to say what I designed to say to Matteo, my foster-brother, to yourselves, who, although from a sad cause, are fortunately assembled here. You will say, ‘What has the young girl, Benvenuta, to say, if she does not wish to sing a *vocero*, and summon his friends to avenge him?’ I reply, beside the sacred duty of revenge, a son of Corsica has another duty which is no less sacred—the protection of the rights of hospitality; and you who are banished for having performed the one sacred duty, are good Corsicans who will hold hospitality equally sacred. Murat, then, the fallen King of Naples, is among us,

having fled to Vescovato, beneath the old Colonna roof, as a fugitive entreating protection. He is not a fugitive pursued by a single enemy or a small body of officers, and whom my father, grandfather, servants and kinsmen could protect: in pursuit of this flying king, France and Naples, and, if need be, the rulers of other lands, will send their armies and fleets. Vescovato is already in arms; but all Corsica must arm, for it is not to Franceschetti, my father, that he has come, but to Corsica, as a land of hospitality; for in every other country upon the globe, persecutions and humiliations await him. Corsica must not permit a hair of his head to be harmed, while he treads this land of heroes. I wish to tell you this, that you may repeat it to the other brave men in the various *Macchias*; give signals, whatever signals you have, for a meeting; send out the goatherds, who know their hiding-places among the bushes, on the mountain tops, and in the valleys and ravines. Choose *parolanti* to go to your enemies and quiet the avenger and effect a reconciliation forever, or at least as long as Corsica is threatened with dishonor. It is thus that we have ever acted when our native land has been menaced; it was done under Sampiero and Paoli; and what has been done for freedom, must be done for hospitality also; for this, in Corsica, is as sacred as freedom itself. It was this that I had to say to you; pardon a young girl for doing so."

Benvenuta had uttered this, hardly raising her voice as she spoke, or moving a muscle; as she stood there looking into the faces of these fierce men, she appeared perfectly calm; but her bosom throbbed, her voice slightly faltered, her eyes flashed, and it seemed as though she had grown taller by a whole head.

“My foster-sister,” said Matteo in reply, “you have come on no fruitless mission. I could almost shed tears at your courage in thus coming to the *Macchia* by night. We are unfortunate men, who have no longer a hearth-stone; but we have a fatherland, and this the French shall never sully. Let us but bury the dead, and we will then send out our signals and messengers, as you command.”

She gave him her hand, and he kissed his foster-sister's brow.

Mattea remained watching with the corpse, but one of the outlaws accompanied Benvenuta and Nadir through the *Macchia*, by paths which brought them surprisingly quick to the highway. The outlaw remained standing some time on the border of the woods, looking with longing eyes over the open country, as if he were enjoying a sweet sight which had long been denied him, and then again disappeared in the thicket, while Benvenuta and her companion hurried on toward the valley with rapid steps, for the loftiest mountain tops already began to be colored with the light of day.

The brighter the light shone upon the peaks of the mountains, the more rapidly did Benvenuta hasten forward: shortening the distance, she left the winding highway to go direct to Vescovato; hedges, cultivated fields, beds of brooks which had been washed away, high banks and steep declivities,—nothing could arrest her progress. But the remnant of her shoes, which had already been torn to pieces on the thorny, rocky paths through the *Macchia*, soon increased the difficulties of the way; her feet were bleeding, and she was wearied to death; her long journey by night, and all that she had passed through since the previous noon,

had taxed her strength to the utmost; the young girl's frame had less iron than her will. Nadir saw, with solicitude, how, as she drew herself along, the blood from her feet was marked on the stones; and she again and again summoned all her strength, after a few rapid steps, to again sink down. He entreated her to rest a little, but she wished to be at home before her family had awaked; she wanted no one to know of the expedition which she had undertaken during the night, and two high ranges of hills still lay between her and Ves-covato. The travelers now stood by a precipice, over which they could alone make their way above the *debris* of a mountain-stream whose waters had dried up. The stones and shrubs gave way beneath Benvenuta's feet: she exerted herself as if in a nightmare, but could not advance. At last she sank to the ground; and dropping her arms at her side, she said, with a smile, "I can go no farther!"

A beam of the early morning light rested upon her beautiful features, which were pale and exhausted, while her large black eyes sparkled only the more brightly. She smiled because she blushed at her weakness; and this weakness and helplessness surrounded her with something unspeakably childlike, which was in striking contrast to the strong and heroic nature which alone Nadir had, until now, seen in her. A child, a woman lay before him. He stood there, with his arms pressed closely across his bosom, looking with admiration and sympathy upon the singular girl. He could have thrown himself before her and humbly pressed his brow against her bleeding feet, and then raised her up and clasped her like a child to his breast. His eastern soul was both sensitive and ardent; but he had been too

long among the people of the west, not to repress words and tears which, at home in the desert, he would have permitted to flow without shame or restraint. Benvenuta saw in his eyes only sympathy and compassion; she gave him a gentle smile, and with the most womanly softness said:

“You are kind, Nadir, my friend! All mankind are indeed brethren: for here a son of the distant east comes to the aid of a poor Corsican maiden, to accompany her as a faithful protector, through dangers and the night, and with her to care for an unhappy fugitive who is neither a brother nor relative of either the Corsican girl or the Arab. It is a beautiful deed and full of encouragement and cheer; and I thank God, the Father of the Mohammedans as well as of the Christians, for the brotherly love which he has sent over the wide earth, east and west the same, like a lamb of the early spring-time!”

“Like a lamb of the early spring-time!” exclaimed Nadir, and the reserve and self-restraint which European culture had given him, melted away before Benvenuta’s words and his own ardor. He fell upon his knees before her and embraced her bleeding feet, upon which tears coursed down in flowing streams. “You are a philosopher and a heroine,” exclaimed he, sobbing; “would that I could die for you, die at your feet!”

Benvenuta sprang up. “Come, let us go on!” said she.

But she had not advanced two steps upon the difficult way, when she felt herself forcibly raised from the ground, and she lay like a child in Nadir’s arms. Thundering like a torrent, the *debris* plunged below into the ravine, while Nadir flew upward with his burden, as if upon wings. Arrived at the summit, Benvenuta endeavored to disengage herself from his arms. “Let

me walk," said she, "the remainder of the way is less difficult;" but he did not heed her, and only pressed her the more closely to his bosom, as though some one had sought to tear her from him, and he did not mean that she should leave him more. Up hill and down, on he hastened, heedless of rocks, hedges, and chasms; and as the morning wind began to blow fresh from the sea, he wrapped his white mantle about Benvenuta, making him look like one who flees from robbers, with a treasure wrapped in the folds of his clothing. She distinctly heard the throbbing of his heart, and watched him as, breathing with dilated nostrils, he now cast his dark eyes abroad over the country and now looked mildly and fervidly down upon her; but, in her anxiety, she did not dare to move or to offer opposition to his further assistance. She suspected that the violent beating of his heart, which she so distinctly heard, was not caused by his rapid gait or the burden which he bore,—and he knew it. He felt happy as never before, and for the first time he understood what the Europeans mean by love. He could have pressed forward thus forever, with Benvenuta clasped to his heart, and his glance, as he cast his eye over the country, seemed as much to betray a fear that some enemy might come and rob him of his beloved burden, as anguish at the termination of this happy journey. His ardor, however, would not allow him to linger on the way, and Benvenuta's wish to reach home before daybreak, was paramount to the pleasure of carrying his lovely burden. He therefore hastened on without stopping, and the houses of Vescovato and the Capuchin convent now were close before him. The close of the most blissful moment of his life lay beyond him: in a kind of madness he hastened up the

last hill, and upon a sort of grassy seat, which the fathers had placed for themselves beneath the chestnut-trees behind the monastery, he gently laid Benvenuta; and then, without a look, sank, with a deep sigh, exhausted and breathless, on the turf. There he lay like a corpse. Benvenuta gave him an anxious look: "Nadir!" she stammered; but he did not move. She then bent over and gently drew off the mantle which he had thrown over his head; his eyes were filled with tears as he looked at her, and he seized her hand and covered it with kisses.

In the convent garden, however, behind the live-hedge which inclosed it, lay Carabelli. When he entered the convent, the night before, he found among the officers of high rank, who were lodged there, many Corsicans also, who looked at him with suspicion, and, like Serafino, murmured something about the "bad blood of the Carabelli." He felt uncomfortable in the monastery; and in order to avoid applying at a Corsican cottage, he went into the convent garden. The night was warm and beautiful; he could camp under the hedge. While there, he saw Nadir and Benvenuta pass by, on their way to the *Macchia*; he shook his head, for he saw that it was the daughter of Franceschetti; and as to the Arab, he already knew that he had come with Murat. Whenever he awoke from his uneasy sleep, he looked in the direction that the two travelers had disappeared. Consequently, his prying eyes saw Nadir advancing at early daybreak from out the deep ravine, with Benvenuta upon his breast; he watched him as he laid her upon the grassy bank, and saw him weep and cover her hand with kisses.

As they walked on toward the village, Carabelli rose

and stretched his head up over the hedge, to watch them as long as possible.

“They have been to the *Macchia* to call the outlaws, and they appear to have sworn eternal friendship on the road. Well, if the outlaws come, it behooves one to be doubly cautious.”

The watch-fires had burned low in the village as well as upon the hill-tops; and the young girls of Vescovato, with their large copper-handled pitchers upon their heads, were on their way to the fountain.

CHAPTER VII.

NEGOTIATIONS.

IN order to understand the events of this and the following days, it must be stated that more than two thousand officers of Corsican birth had acknowledged Murat as their general and king. Such of these as had passed through the numerous and sanguinary battles of the last few years with their lives, had now met in their native land. From Bastia and the adjoining country they had come the very first day, and from more distant places, as soon as the intelligence of the arrival of the ex-king—news which spread, moreover, with astounding rapidity—reached them. They came without knowing why, or for what object. Some came to see their king, and others with undefined hopes of something in the future. Once there, they remained, and with the greater hope and expectation, indeed, as they perceived their large numbers and the readiness of the people to serve the king. In the morning, as Murat after a protracted sleep which was fruitful in pleasant dreams, looked out the window, he saw whole troops of familiar and friendly uniforms. He smiled, but his eye rested with emotion upon Nadir, who was sitting, buried in thought, alone upon the cornerstone of the entrance to the court-yard. He tapped lightly upon the window, when Nadir started, looked up and obeyed the signal which beckoned him to the king.

“My friend,” said the latter as the Arabian entered,

“you see the men out there with their high titles and their rich uniform? What they have, they got from me; with me they were happy, they shared my power, my glory, and my wealth. They are now fallen like myself, but of their past life, like their glory, no one can rob them. And yet, not one of them has done as much for me as yourself. They accompanied me when I could repay every deed like a god. You joined me when I was in distress; you rescued me from the hands of my foes and from death, and exposed yourself to the most imminent danger with no hope of recompense. I cannot suffer that you should be considered one of my servants,—what can I do for you?”

Nadir gazed at the king with a look of gratitude, but shrugged his shoulders and said with a smile of pain, “Nothing!”

“Nothing? You think me poor, Nadir?” pursued the king. “I am not so, notwithstanding the act of treachery that you witnessed. I have saved many jewels, and the next few days will bring from Paris an agent with a large amount of wealth, which I had invested there. You know, too, that three ships have been purchased and equipped for me at Bastia.”

“Thank you, Sire,” replied Nadir; “I need no money.”

“What do you need? Do you seek honors?”

“Once back in my native land, Sire, my countrymen would pay me every honor.”

“Do you wish to receive a proper provision which will enable you to return in a worthy, splendid manner, in accordance with your rank, to your native country? I will give you one of my ships, I will lade it with treasure, and will have my highest officers escort you in triumph to your home.”

Nadir shook his head. "I once," said he, with a quivering voice, "I once dreamed of such a return to my home, but there is no one there whom I love. Is it still my home? One's home is where his heart is. Besides, I view life in a different manner from that in which they do there. I should feel myself a stranger there, a stranger in my native land."

Murat looked fixedly at him in surprise. Another man stood before him. The composure and cheerfulness under the greatest dangers, which had excited his admiration, were gone; and in their stead, a deep look of melancholy rested upon his features, and a sadness and self-renouncing grief, which he could not explain, spoke in every word and tone. The knowledge of hearts and of men was never the strong point of that easy nature of this child of fortune, who permitted himself to be borne up and down by fate, as upon a billow, and who studied occurrences and events more than people. After a long pause he said:

"I do not understand you, Nadir. What would you like to have?"

"Nothing!" replied Nadir as before. "To remain here upon this island,—perhaps to die here."

At this the king laughed. "You are in love; I understand now."

He laid his hand upon Nadir's shoulder and looked at him with that winning smile which was ever wont to dissipate all anxiety and despondency, and for which Murat was remarkable; a smile which had gained him so many hearts, and inspired them with confidence and hope. Nadir, too, was forced to smile, and it seemed to him, for a moment at least, as if all his cares and sorrows were taken away. Murat, with his hand still

resting upon his shoulder, led him to the window and said :

“A few days ago you saw me in the deepest distress ; now see these multitudes who have already rallied about me, and who are increasing in number every hour. I need speak but a word, issue a proclamation, and an army stands in array, and I can make myself master of this beautiful island. I could not be again conquered by the united power of Europe, but should have added weeks and months of glory to the years of my greatest renown, and Europe would say, ‘The star of Murat shines longer than the sun of Austerlitz.’ Thus life, if we trust in it, shines, you see, with a luster ever new.”

He paused, for he observed that the armed men before the house, as well as all Vescovato, were in great commotion. The men who had lain down under the chestnut-trees, sprang up and seized their arms, the veterans among them formed themselves into rank and file, others ran as messengers hither and thither, and the officers separated and joined the single groups and bands. Murat leaned his forehead against the window pane and said : “It looks as if a battle might be near ; the enemy is certainly approaching !”

Franceschetti entered and confirmed the last remark of the king. Horsemen and *gensd’armes* were seen approaching from Bastia, followed by infantry.

“I must go down,” exclaimed Murat. “Franceschetti, my friend, have me a horse saddled ; a horse ! a horse !”

“No, your Majesty !” said Franceschetti, with a smile.

“Why not ?”

“If your Majesty mounts your horse,” said Franceschetti, still smiling, but yet in a gently dissuasive tone, “a battle will ensue ; and that your Majesty does not wish.”

"You are right," said the king, with a laugh. "Once in the saddle, I must advance. I will go below and speak to them afoot."

"Neither do I think that advisable, your Majesty," said the general; "it is better not to afford the government and the men from Bastia the slightest grounds for accusation, or have the least collision with the soldiery."

"How!" indignantly exclaimed the king; "am I to act as if these good people who have taken up arms for me, were not in existence?"

"The people know how to judge of your position, Sire, and the least among them knows that caution, upon your part, is imperative. They are here to protect the rights of hospitality of the Colonna."

"And not for my service?" demanded Murat with a frown.

"For your service, Sire, as soon as you declare yourself, as soon as you wish it; but let us not allow the government of Louis the Eighteenth, and the allies at Paris, to know it yet."

"You are always in the right, my dear Franceschetti. But what is going to be done now?"

"The troops will remain upon the heights, for they will not dare to enter when they see the large number of armed Corsicans. Their commander, if he at all knows our country, will beware of a bloody assault upon our house. He knows that a contrary course would bring against him the whole island, and just at this time, when France is not sure of her troops, and would fain make Europe and the allies believe that the Bourbons are received with satisfaction all over French territory, she cannot wish to see all Corsica in insurrection. One knows of old what an insurrection in Corsica means. I

think that La Verrière, the commandant, is advancing in such an imposing manner merely to lend more emphasis to his negotiations."

"I will not," said the king, "close my ears to honorable conditions."

It happened as Franceschetti prophesied. After the troops had stood for hours motionless upon the heights, leaving the people of Vescovato uncertain whether there would be an engagement or not; after hundreds of armed men, part of whom had followed the troops by by-roads from Bastia, and part come in from the neighboring villages, had poured in, thereby materially increasing the number of the defenders of Murat and the house of the Colonna, the horsemen rode to the entrance of the village, where they halted, and the infantry who were posted upon the heights overlooking Vescovato, stacked their arms. La Verrière, the commandant, accompanied by a small number of officers, rode into the village directly toward the house of Colonna Ceccaldi. He manifested no concern at the warlike appearance of Vescovato, honored the armed men neither right nor left with a glance, sprung from his saddle and demanded of Serafino, who was in attendance at the door, to see Joachim Murat.

Serafino did not understand him. "There is no M. Joachim Murat here," said he.

The muscles about La Verrière's mouth became slightly contracted, and with a contemptuous gesture of his left hand, he impatiently and emphatically exclaimed:

"His Majesty, then, King Joachim Napoleon!"

"Up stairs, on the next floor," replied Serafino, with a bow.

La Verrière hastened up the stairs. The officers re-

mained in the court-yard, and on horseback; one alone, a handsome young man not above four and twenty years of age, at the most, whose dark complexion and whole appearance at once betrayed him to be a Corsican, bounded from his saddle and hastened into the large drawing-room, on the lower floor. He pressed the hand of the aged Colonna Ceccaldi, who was seated in his accustomed place, and then kissed those of Catherine, who, as he entered, started up in some dismay. The young officer greeted them both, though respectfully, yet with much haste, in order as soon as possible to reach Benvenuta, who was standing upon a raised platform, within the alcove of the window, and who had seen him enter.

"Benvenuta," he exclaimed, opening his arms, "it is so long since I have seen you, dearest!"

Benvenuta was silent, and made a movement as if to repel him.

"Are you angry because I have not been here for so long a time? Pardon me; our duties at Bastia are now so onerous, the troops are untrustworthy, and it seems as if a hundred events were ready to take place around us, and an officer should not leave the fortress an hour."

"Signor Galvani Serra," said Benvenuta with a frown, "you seem to be a conscientious and zealous servant of France."

"My daughter!" exclaimed her mother reproachfully.

"Benvenuta," said Galvani Serra in surprise, "how are you speaking to your affianced husband?"

"Your surprise at my manner proves to me that you do not know me, and that we are not designed for each

other. You are my affianced husband no longer, for you are the enemy of my family!"

"An enemy of your family!" exclaimed Galvani Serra with a bitter laugh; "you talk childishly, Benvenuta."

"An enemy," she said with emphasis, "such as Corsica has never produced before. That you love me, and wish to marry me, does not prove the contrary. You come in the ranks of the enemy, and as one of their officers, to pursue a fugitive, and take away the right of exercising hospitality, a right claimed by the Colonna family and by all Corsica. Look, the very lowest man out there is better than you. They are neither my lovers nor my kindred, as you are, yet they all armed themselves and assembled as soon as it was reported that a person had arrived who was menaced by danger, and whose sole resort was flight to Corsica, for protection. You remain over there with those who wish to make war upon us, and who perhaps will yet do so, and if La Verrière gives the order, you yourself will lead the soldiery against us and against that hospitality which is our right."

"I am in the service of France," stammered Serra in confusion.

"The sons of Corsica, in other days, did not so understand the service," said Benvenuta in a harsh tone, interrupting him: "they have fought everywhere bravely, and against every foe, but never against Corsica and Corsican customs."

"Benvenuta is right!" Colonna here broke in.

"We have not yet fallen so low as to be the slaves of the French," pursued Benvenuta, "to be obliged to fight against the people of our native land. This aged man

here has fought under Pasquale Paoli against France; ought I, his grandchild, to become so thoroughly French as to marry a catchpoll of France?"

The young officer started, and the Corsican blood began to boil in his veins. "Give me the ring, Benvenuta,—give me the ring," he exclaimed in an ejaculatory manner; "we are now at enmity!"

"Here is the ring!" said she, and drew it from her pocket.

He took the engagement ring and rushed from the room into the court-yard, still gazing at the golden circlet as though it had been something hideous.

"What have you in your hand there, at which you are gazing with such a horrid look? A ring? What is there so terrible in that?"

"With this ring," exclaimed Serra with a laugh, "I betroth myself to France forever, let her make me a spy, a catchpoll, or whatever she will, so that I may but take revenge upon this island and its frenzy!"

"A ring?" asked Carabelli, who had entered into conversation with the officers; "I can imagine where it comes from."

Serra, in his agitation, ran out upon the square. "I must quiet him," said Carabelli, and followed him. "Signor Galvani Serra," said he in a low tone, "just as you entered the house, I learned that you were the affianced husband of the daughter of Franceschetti."

"Who are you?"

Carabelli made no reply, and pursued: "A servant informed me of the fact, and now I see you hasten from the house in agitation, and with a ring in your hand. Madamigella Benvenuta has broken with you, and would you like to know why?"

"Who are you?" repeated the officer.

"A faithful servant of his Majesty, Louis the Eighteenth," said Carabelli in a low tone; "one must not say such a thing aloud here, although the old Colonna conducts himself like a Bourbonist. It may go ill with all of us who acknowledge Louis the Eighteenth; just look at these fellows in arms, and for two hours past one bandit after another has been coming in, and many others will follow; all the *Macchias* are aroused. But I must remain; loyalty and duty keep me here."

"No more until you tell me your name!" exclaimed Serra in an imperious tone.

"Very well, then, although my name is not to the point,—it is Ignatius Carabelli."

"Carabelli? A traitor—bad blood!" exclaimed the other, with manifest aversion.

"A traitor? I have, it is true, much to expose to you which will open your eyes, and whether bad blood runs in my veins or not, will be seen by the service I render the King of France and Ferdinand of Sicily. What more can be demanded than faithful and useful services? Now, however, I am in a position to render a very important one to yourself and to every potentate of Europe, and there shall yet be Corsicans who, after Napoleon's overthrow, stand up by the side of Pozzo di Borgo. Pozzo di Borgo opposed this Bonaparte all his life, and now he alone, of all the Corsicans, stands upright. But you are not listening to me; you are utterly indifferent to all these things now—you are thinking of your dismissal."

"Silence!" exclaimed Galvani Serra.

"No, I must show you the matter in its true light. I am indeed a traitor; I can betray Signorina Benve-

nuta and the reason that has led her to give a brave, handsome, young officer his dismissal."

Serra grew more attentive, and Carabelli continued: "She was away from home the whole night, in company with an Arabian, who came with the ex-king; I saw them as they returned home toward morning. Ah, what ardent looks he cast on her!—hush, do not fly into a passion—come a little farther away from the house, so that no one will see us. I have a great deal more to tell you; the ex-king, too, has made a great impression upon her. You should only hear her speak of him. Do you know that it was Benvenuta who called the village to arms, and that this same little Signorina brought the banditti from the *Macchia*? Yes, it is a fact; I had it directly from the first bandit who came in this morning. Oh, she is a fine creature, this Benvenuta Benedetta, and your loss is a great one!"

Galvani Serra stood gloomily before the speaker, as if devoid of consciousness. The words sounded in his ears, but he was forced to make an effort in order to take in their meaning after they were uttered, and to comprehend their import.

Carabelli roused him: "Try to collect your thoughts, for I have something of greater importance to tell you. It would be best communicated to La Verrière, but if I attempted to speak with him, it would excite suspicion, and I cannot leave for Bastia under three or four days. You must tell him that I confided it to you, for his information. Murat's money, which he invested in Paris, is to arrive upon the island to-day; I know this to be a fact, for he himself told me so, when referring to the recompense awaiting my fidelity. A part of the money is

to be expended in the purchase of the three ships which are being equipped for him at Bastia ; let them get ready to put to sea, and then seize them, for everything he has, all his papers, and his correspondence carried on at Toulon with the Carbonari at Naples, will be in them. It is very important, in the first place, that he should have no money, and then, that he should have no ships. Three vessels will place him in a position to render the whole Mediterranean insecure, but these lost, he is a prisoner in our hands, and all his treasure with him. France will be sure and manage these hospitable Corsicans and banditti. And is not the English fleet near by at Livorno, Genoa, and Toulon ? They are vexed enough that he has escaped them. Do you understand ?”

“You are the prince of traitors !” said Serra abstractedly.

“Traitors ! Heaven forbid ! I seek revenge upon those Corsicans who say that bad blood runs in the veins of the Carabelli ! And you, too, shall have revenge !”

“Yes,” exclaimed Serra, “revenge, for it is through his fault that I have lost her, and he is one of the family of the woman who has offered me a mortal insult. And the old fool there, Colonna, approved of the mad conduct of his grandchild. I shall shout for joy when I see your house in flames and all your guests ruined !”

With a gesture of menace he looked toward the house. La Verrière at that moment came out, and gloomily and silently mounted his horse. Serra hastened away without honoring Carabelli with a parting look, bounded haughtily into his saddle, turned away from the house, and galloped off with the rest.

La Verrière and his officers had hardly reached the

troops, when a shout was raised which was heard in Vescovato—a shout which did not seem like a battle cry or cries of menace, but rather like one of exultation. The greater part of these troops were Napoleon's veterans, who were evidently rejoicing that they had not been called upon to turn their arms against Murat and his friends, or, had such been the case, that they had not been forced to offer resistance to their present commander. They seized their arms, put themselves in brisk motion, and were soon out of sight behind the hills, on their way to Bastia, while their shouts were echoed back from Vescovato.

La Verrière had every reason to return to Bastia in the highest degree dissatisfied. Firmly resolved to force Murat to leave the island, or else to take him prisoner, and thus fulfill the fondest wish of Fouché and Louis the Eighteenth, by giving him into their hands, he came to Vescovato only to become speedily convinced that, commanding untrustworthy troops, he was unable to cope with the united defenders of the ex-king, and that he must treat with the latter upon equal terms, content if he could induce him to leave the island, and thus prevent any further commotion. Fully determined, of course, as a legitimist and representative of his rightful king, to treat Murat as a private person only, he found himself obliged, while in his presence, to undergo, in a still higher degree, the same experience, and make the same concession, only in a more dignified manner, to which he had been forced by Serafino, at the door below. An old emigrant, who had served from his youth as an officer of the *suite* of the undignified Count of Provence, his present sovereign, he had been driven about without ever catching a glimpse of the *parvenus* who, since the beginning of

the century, had ruled half of Europe as kings and emperors, and he was the more surprised, while all his conceptions and ideas became confused as he suddenly stood before this son of the Cahors innkeeper, and witnessed in him a dignity and majesty such as La Verrière had never seen in any legitimate sovereign, and, indeed, such as no monarch of that time knew how to exhibit like Murat. Upon the battle-field, a knightly horseman who drove whole squadrons hither and thither, and rode down the most powerful *carrés*; among his friends, a familiar companion and genuine French "*bon enfant*," making no pretensions to superiority; in his family, childlike and affectionate; he was, the moment he was called upon to assume a lordly dignity, wholly a king, and such a one as a superstitious loyalty would have imagined in a sovereign, "by the Grace of God," the descendant of a hundred royal ancestors. M. de la Verrière did what a quarter of an hour before he would have considered impossible: he bowed in profound reverence to the man who, perhaps, in his youth, had waited at table upon his father's guests, and committed treason against his legitimist convictions which he had imbibed with his mother's milk, by addressing this man as "Your Majesty." He had come, too, to command, whereas he merely offered propositions, and heard the pleasure of the ex-king, as he remained standing in his presence. Murat merely designed to await, here in Corsica, the termination of his negotiations with Austria and England, and whatever those powers might send him. He was not at war with Louis the Eighteenth, and he therefore could have no desire to incite here any insurrection or revolt against France. While upon the territory of France, where he had lived as a private person, and where he had hoped

to find an asylum, the servants of his Majesty, Louis the Eighteenth, had conducted themselves toward him in an unworthy manner, and obliged him to seek the protection of the hospitable people of Corsica. Here he intended to wait until, having learned the result of his negotiations with Castlereagh and Metternich, he should lay further plans. He sought nothing but peace with Louis the Eighteenth, against whom he had never been engaged in conflict, and it would certainly not be his fault if this peace were interrupted.

With this answer, M. de la Verrière was forced to be contented, and was obliged, although he had many objections to offer, to bow and take his leave, as Murat with a gracious smile dismissed him.

The next morning it was reported in Vescovato that La Verrière was vigorously engaged in placing Bastia in a position of defense.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE KING WEEPS.

MANY and great were the changes which took place in Vescovato also, during this and the following day. If Bastia assumed a warlike aspect, Vescovato, too, looked more and more like a military camp, and a comparison between the two places would have shown the village to be stronger than the town. Bastia looked like a stronghold, with its works of defense, while Vescovato seemed the army which had only to make a short march to reduce the stronghold to extremity. The fortress, besides, was garrisoned by untrustworthy soldiers, and the town by inhabitants who were favorably disposed toward the enemy, while the greater part, at least, of Vescovato were unanimous in thought and feeling. The Capuchin convent became a complete citadel, and was filled with veterans. Three days had sufficed to rouse the entire island, and bring together a numerous body of men, and among them the banditti from the distant *Macchias*. They came in by troops, men often coming side by side who were seeking each other's blood, but who, by means of *parolanti*, had secured a reconciliation for the time being, or forever, as has frequently happened in Corsica, during times of danger; for although the *Vendetta* is inscribed upon the heart of the Corsican, his passions, which are readily excited either to good or evil, are easily moved by noble motives to a reconciliation. It

has often happened that two enemies, at the moment of combat, have fallen into each other's arms, or that one of these avengers of blood, moved by the defenselessness of his victim, whom he has found asleep, has burst into tears. The houses in Vescovato were insufficient to lodge all the strangers, and it was necessary to bring provisions from distant villages, and from the market at Bastia. Signora Catherine Franceschetti emptied her well-filled granary and store-rooms, and every day sent servants in every direction to purchase fresh provisions. The aged Colonna Ceccaldi sold, at the time, a house which he owned in Bastia, in order to obtain cash, which was so rare in Corsica, to procure sustenance for his one distinguished guest, and for the rest of those who, in such numbers, claimed his hospitality.

Benvenuta had done what the arrival of the king had prompted her to do, she had called out armed men from the village and from the *Macchias*, and she had severed a tie that was hateful to her. She now returned again into the home circle, permitted herself to be but seldom seen by the men, as is the custom among the women of Corsica, and aided her mother in the ordering of court, kitchen, and cellar, where there was so much to be performed. Nadir lay in the garden beneath the shade of the plane-trees, from which place he could often see her in the back garden—and dreamed. Upon the threshold of the house sat old Mattea, in her Sunday attire, a blue kerchief upon her head and wrapped about her tuft of hair, and a white, full garment around her long limbs. She was looking out upon the square where her son Matteo was lying, among the other armed men; his rifle was resting against a chestnut-tree at some distance from him, and he was playing upon a violin. To her, this

warlike camp was a picture of happiness and peace, for Matteo had effected a reconciliation with his enemy. There were no spies there to be feared, and after years of wandering in the wilderness, he was again living among men, without any need for either of them to fear that a ball might at any moment lay him low. He was once more playing the violin, as he had done in childhood; and as she listened to the notes, they seemed like a prophecy of happiness. With what pleasure did she see his rifle at a distance from him; the weapon which for years, waking or sleeping, had not quit his side! When Benvenuta would pass by her, across the threshold, or show herself back in the court-yard, she would exclaim with lifted hands, "God bless you, as you go out and as you come in, Maria Benvenuta! child without an equal; for to you I owe these days of tranquillity, and a happiness such as these old eyes never hoped to see more." Or, "Maria Benvenuta, blessed child, you have taken from me all the grief, from the depths of which I chanted my *vocero* over that dead man; and the milk which you drew from my breast you have repaid by giving me a life of peace. May your guardian angel watch over you forever and ever."

The king, following Franceschetti's advice, or if forgetful of it, reminded of it anew and restrained by his host, remained in his apartments, to guard against affording France any grounds for reproach, and to avoid exciting the easily inflamed natures of the Corsicans, and to prevent any demonstration which might endanger the conservative position which he had assumed, or prove an injury to the people of Corsica. He transacted business with his agents, who were constantly arriving from the continent, and again dispatched them with new commis-

sions, hither and thither, for the most part to Bastia, where they were to pay for the ships which had been purchased, and to hasten their equipment, in order that upon the receipt of favorable intelligence from Castlereagh and Metternich, they might be ready to sail, and no longer disquiet the island which had received him with so much hospitality, nor longer be burdensome to the noble family who were his hosts. When business with his agents was finished, and the necessary letters were written, he sat quietly down to his "Filippini," those annals which so abound with the wonderful and heroic deeds of this remarkable island. How could the house of Colonna Ceccaldi be without that book, when so many of its pages speak of the deeds of the Colonna? Nor was it missing in any house of Vescovato, for Filippini was a native of that village, and Corsican history seems to always have chosen that place for its favorite spot, and it is consequently alluded to on almost every page of that old chronicle.

"What a wonderful book! what an encouraging one!" once exclaimed Murat, as Franceschetti entered the room. "I read here of outlawed heroes who, miserably equipped and with few or no friends, often landed upon the coast; and how multitudes immediately rallied around them, and how in a few days they freed their native land."

"Yes," said Franceschetti, proudly, "the annals of Corsica recount such narratives upon every page; and this Filippini was not a thoroughly loyal son of his native country. He sided, it may have been from fear, with Genoa. Truth, however, forced him to narrate these accounts. But," added the general with a smile, "there is only one Corsica."

"You are mistaken," said the king, hastily interrupting him, "my Calabrians have all the virtues and qualities of the Corsicans. They are proud, and, like the Corsicans, revenge every insult offered them; they love their country and liberty, and they are grateful for kindnesses which have been shown them. Were one who loves his native country, to land on her coasts, proclaim liberty, and declare her hated tyrants outlawed—certainly, Franceschetti——"

He did not finish, but threw his brown locks back from his forehead and strode up and down the apartment.

Franceschetti remained quietly in his place, gazing sadly at the excited man, and debating with himself whether he should offer any reply or not, and finally said:

"The first question is whether a landing could be effected. English ships are cruising from Livorno to Sicily."

"Ah, the English ships!" contemptuously exclaimed Murat; "did not Napoleon and I sail from Egypt to France directly through the English fleet? Did not I take Capri from the English, in spite of their fleet and before its very eyes? Did not the emperor escape from Elba through the midst of English ships?"

"And then in Calabria even," slowly pursued Franceschetti, "who will engage that on landing, he may not be met by the soldiers of Ferdinand, instead of the Calabrians?"

"The soldiers of Ferdinand!" laughed Murat; "when and where have not the soldiers of the Sicilian Bourbons been beaten? Tell me that, Franceschetti, if you can. And who says that they are soldiers of Ferdinand? Perhaps they are mine; the very soldiers whom I have

taught to conquer upon so many battle-fields. How must they feel under that Ferdinand !”

He again laughed. “As for the Bourbons of Naples,” he pursued gravely, “I should care less for them were it not for all Europe, or rather for the allies, whose sole thought and feeling now is their fanaticism for legitimate succession, and who would turn against me and deluge my fair kingdom with blood.”

“That is so; that certainly would be the case !” assented Franceschetti, breathing again.

“Let us not speak further on the subject, my friend,” said Murat, and passed his hand over his brow; “thoughts, possibilities, and dreams like these, often pass strangely through my head. One who has accomplished so much, has a right, when fortune is against him, to at least dream. We will await, even while I keep on dreaming, the answer which I shall receive from Austria and England. It is to be regretted that I have not entered into communication with the Emperor Alexander; he is the best of them all, and knows, too, how to regard legitimacy. It is certainly a question, whether he could ever forget the battle of Borodino.”

This word evidently completely restored his serenity. “To-morrow, or the day after,” said he, “Maceroni must be here, and then everything will be decided, and all will be well. He is of Italian descent, but an Englishman by birth. He is devoted to Italy and to me, and has the confidence of the English; so that he seems to have come into the world to act as mediator between Great Britain and myself, and I feel convinced that he has secured me most favorable conditions.”

Nadir now entered and announced that Carabelli had disappeared. He had not been seen since morning. The

whole village was in commotion, and every one was positive that he was plotting some act of treachery. He, Nadir, had been directed to inform the king.

"No doubt," said Franceschetti, "if Carabelli has disappeared without taking leave, treason must be in progress."

"I know," said Murat, smiling, "there are prejudices against Carabelli, on account of some old stories that are told about his family. A member of his house once led Clemens Paoli into an ambuscade, in order to give him into the hands of the Genoese; and since then bad blood has been attributed to the Carabelli, by the Corsicans. I am aware of it; Carabelli has told me himself. But that is punishing the children for the sins of their forefathers, and by treating them with contempt, they may perhaps be driven to show 'bad blood,' when they are the most disposed to wash away the stain from their family, by their own fidelity."

"He has, however, disappeared most unaccountably," said Nadir, "and that he is a sneaking fellow and eavesdropper, I have experienced myself."

"But, good heavens!" exclaimed Murat, "what should he betray? What is there to betray? What my designs and private negotiations are, M. de la Verrière knows from my own mouth better than any person upon the island, with the exception of Franceschetti. No, my friends, I do not believe that Carabelli has been guilty of treachery. I have loaded him and his brother with benefits, and they are Corsicans. When I cast a glance out the window, can I permit the thought to enter my mind that treachery can flourish in Corsica?"

And so saying he stepped to the window and looked at the camp.

"I am forced to the belief," he exclaimed, "that I am under the protection of a higher power. I see miracles performed for my sake, before my very eyes. Through whose efforts has it been that immediately upon my arrival, when I had hardly presented myself to Franceschetti, the whole village rose in arms in my defense, and finally that all the people from the surrounding country came in, and above all, the outlaws from the distant *Macchias*? Within a few days the appearance of Vescovato has completely altered; enemies have, for my sake, become reconciled, the woods are all deserted, and an army of warriors stands ready at my command. Why do you smile, Nadir?"

Nadir was indeed smiling, and with an air of happy mystery.

"Because I know the secret of the miracle."

"What do you know of it? Tell me!"

"I may betray the secret in the presence of the general, for to him, I know, it has been confessed long since."

Franceschetti smiled, and Nadir continued: "Had your Majesty paid more regard to a certain pair of eyes in this house, your Majesty would know whose eyes they are, which are watching here like those of a compassionate and guardian angel."

"Of whom do you speak with such devotion, Nadir?"

"Of Maria Benvenuta, the general's daughter; a maiden of a sublimity of character that is divine."

"Well,—and she?" asked the king.

"She," proudly pursued Nadir, "she it was who called out the men of Vescovato, and induced them to dispatch couriers into the surrounding country. It was she who went by night to the banditti in the *Macchias*; she——"

“Let me see your child,” exclaimed the king, turning to Franceschetti, “that I may thank her.”

The general left the room and soon returned with Benvenuta. She came in trembling, and remained standing a few steps from the door. Murat approached her, drew her gently inside the apartment, and seated her beside him. He meant to thank her for the deed she had done in his behalf. The sight of her, however, evidently moved him, and drove it from his mind. He looked on her a long time, and then pressing her head to his bosom, he said, with tears in his eyes: “Happy the man who can press his children thus to his breast. Where are mine at this moment? Where are they wandering? Upon the raging sea, or in a foreign land where they will be treated as captives? Ah, perhaps I may never see them more—never!”

Tears coursed down his cheeks and fell in scalding torrents upon Benvenuta’s head. Beneath these tears her whole soul longed to be a man that she might shed her last drop of blood in restoring the unfortunate king to his former prosperity. She raised her eyes and gave the weeping man a glance which made Nadir’s very heart tremble, and he turned away that he might not be forced to witness longer that look of deep emotion.

CHAPTER IX.

MATTEA.

MACERONI, Murat's long-expected commissioner, had arrived, bringing with him no stipulations whatever, upon the part of England, and such ones from Austria, as, if Murat had accepted them, would have consigned him to little better than Austrian captivity. Prince Metternich now offered much harder conditions than he had done a fortnight previously, for Gaeta, which had held out for a long time after Murat's flight from his kingdom, had during that time fallen into the possession of Austria, and Queen Caroline found herself and children upon Austrian territory. They might be treated as hostages under the supposition that Murat would accept any proposition, simply for the sake of joining his family. The idea did not occur that there was nothing harder or more terrible upon earth for Murat, than the thought of living a fugitive, shorn of power and pomp, upon the favor of an enemy. Wellington and Castlereagh, in their negotiations with Maceroni, had held up the prospect of conditions that were in the highest degree favorable to Murat, as long as he continued in possession of Gaeta, and England had the hope of obtaining from him, as the price of her magnanimity, that fortress, a kind of Italian Gibraltar, of which he, as its recognized sovereign, had a right to dispose. After the fall of Gaeta, the negotiations were broken off, and Maceroni turned to

Metternich. The whole affair was confided to the subalterns who surrounded Metternich, without giving them any definite or express powers. Shortly after Maceroni's arrival at Vescovato, or, as we should now say, at the camp and headquarters of Murat, there came an English officer from Genoa, who represented himself as the adjutant of the commander of the British force in the Mediterranean, and invited Murat to simply surrender himself to his commanding officer; and two days after a second English officer was announced, who came from Livorno with a similar demand, in the name of Lord Burgersh, English minister at the court of Tuscany. Notwithstanding the utter disregard that this conduct indicated, and the informality, and even brutality which it exhibited toward one whom every sovereign in Europe had acknowledged as their equal, and from whom the English, but a short time before, had striven to purchase a powerful fortress, Murat received their advances without betraying any annoyance, and blandly represented to them that the rank of the British officials conveying the order, was not sufficiently high to afford him the necessary guarantees, and that a sovereign, even though unfortunate and powerless, could not surrender himself blindly.

These English officers had come to Corsica in large men-of-war, accompanied by smaller ones. Meeting with a repulse from the king, they did not return to the ports from which they had sailed, but remained with their flotilla, and occupied Bastia and Ajaccio.

While the three most important seaports of Corsica were thus occupied by the English, the garrison of Bastia, from time to time, made threatening advances upon Vescovato. They every time, it is true, retreated with-

out making any warlike demonstration; but Murat and his friends were constantly reminded that the enemy was awaiting a favorable opportunity to put an end, by a single blow, to the state of things induced by the presence of the fugitive king.

Murat saw that he must come to some determination, if it were only to leave the island, without even knowing whither next to turn his steps. Then came the disastrous intelligence from Bastia that his ships, which had just been equipped and paid for, had been confiscated by the government. The purchase had been made privately, in the name of a merchant, its equipment was nominally for a cruise to ports of the Levant,—treachery must be at work.

It was this which affected Murat most deeply, for he who, during the closing days of his reign in Naples, had witnessed so much treachery, was not so constituted as to be able, with all his experience, to believe in it, at least since he, at the farm of Pascal Morin, afterward upon the open sea, and now in Corsica, had received so many proofs of fidelity and devotion. Never, not even at the moment when the treacherous ship was sweeping past him on the broad waters, and he found himself with one single follower in a leaky, tempest-tossed skiff, between the panoply of heaven and the abyss below, did he feel so helpless as when intelligence of the confiscation of his ships arrived in Vescovato. Had not Corsica, his asylum, proved a snare? He gazed speechlessly at Franceschetti and Nadir, who had brought him the news, and then threw himself in a chair and dropped his head upon the edge of the table.

“Now,” he said, after awhile, without raising his head, “now I am a beggar!”

He had not long sat thus, when a singular procession moved in at the door. The aged Colonna entered, one hand resting upon his staff, while he held a small package with the other; behind him came Catherine, his daughter, and Benvenuta, his granddaughter, each of them carrying a small casket.

"This package, my noble guest," said Colonna, "contains what wealth I possess, in bills of exchange upon Ajaccio and Paris. Sire, it is yours. You shall remain my debtor until better days dawn; there is enough to charter and fit out other ships at Ajaccio, to take you to an asylum of safety."

The two women then advanced, and without speaking, placed the caskets beside Colonna's package upon the table. The king opened them, and all kinds of ornaments in diamond and coral were sparkling there. He pressed his hands over his eyes, fell back in his chair, and sobbed aloud. When he had become sufficiently composed to find words to thank his hosts and removed his hands from his eyes, he was alone; the papers and the caskets of jewels had also disappeared; Franceschetti, however, in the evening informed him that men in whom confidence could be placed had gone to Ajaccio to purchase and fit out ships there, with more caution.

The treachery, Murat had soon forgotten; he only thought what faithful friends he had, and that since France had confiscated his ships, he vowed war against her! France, not he, had begun the contest! France, not he, had violated the sacred obligations of hospitality! If he now summoned the Corsicans to protect him, he was forced to it,—the duty of self-preservation compelled him to do so.

"Hardly half a century ago," said he, "did not an

adventurer make his appearance upon these shores and become King of Corsica? And might not I, a sovereign known to fame, succeed in doing what the obscure Theodore Neuhoff accomplished, were it merely to put my enemies to confusion, and show them that I can leave this island with pride and power, and without humiliation?"

The next morning, in full dress, as was his custom upon going into battle, wearing his uniform of dazzling white, and his red sash, he left his apartments and descended the stairs, resolved to join the armed men and place himself at their head. Below he was joined by Franceschetti, who, however, did not wear the uniform of an adjutant-general of Murat, as, out of respect to the king, he had done lately, but a plain short Corsican coat of brown cloth, the *pellone*. Seeing this, the king slightly frowned, and said, in a tone of displeasure, though with a smile: "Franceschetti, you divine my thoughts too well, and give me advice without speaking a word."

He stood some time in meditation, and then pursued: "Some deliberation is, of course, necessary before one scatters sparks in a powder cask, but upon the field of battle, as well as elsewhere, one should listen to the promptings of the moment, for these are sent by Providence. Let us, at all events, go out among the brave people, whose hands I must, for once, press. To maintain reserve longer, would be cold ingratitude."

He went. Haughty and proudly erect, he stepped upon the threshold, and as he stood there, he cast a commanding look over the encampment. But when he again started to pursue his way, a voice below him cried, as if from the depths of the earth:

"King, king, the same fortune does not smile twice on the same mortal!"

He started and looked down; there sat Mattea in her accustomed place upon the lower step, looking up toward him with eyes full of warning and compassion. Her hood had fallen back over her shoulders, exposing to view her heavy white hair, and she looked like a witch or prophetess who places herself in warning across the path of human destiny.

"Who are you?" demanded Murat.

"A woman whose past has been made up of days of suffering, and who therefore sees the unhappy days of the future."

"How do you come here?" he further asked.

"I am Benvenuta's nurse; you can trust me."

These last words strengthened the impression of the warning, as Murat saw that they proceeded from a friendly heart; fearful, however, lest the old woman might say still more to further depress him, he hastily descended the steps, and strode across the court-yard to the square.

Tumultuous shouts of joy were raised to heaven; the clashing of weapons resounded like that of a mighty host. From every side of the square where they had encamped, from the convent, from the houses and cottages, armed men hastened forward and took their places in well ordered divisions, as they had been taught by the officers. Before each division, stood tried leaders, whom Murat recognized as having fought with him upon old battle-fields. The stateliest, however, and as invincible as the old imperial guard, were the powerful band who occupied the center of the square, in the highest degree warlike, although wearing simply the national

costume, the *pellone*, girdle, and Phrygian cap. They comprised not less than eight hundred veterans of Corsican blood, all of whom had served under Murat, and who had assembled during the few days past, and these would be followed by still others. They shouted the war cry, which Murat recognized but too well, and as he passed along their ranks, each one shouted the name of the battles he had fought under him—Aboukir, Eylau, Borodino, and other names. The story of his glory, his grandeur, and his remarkable career, thus sounded continually in his ears, and penetrated deep into his soul. He was speechless; he could only extend his hands right and left. He had already passed through the whole camp several times, but he must needs go through the ranks over and over again. All was now silent like himself; the brave men merely followed his every motion with their eyes. Suddenly a murmur passed through the ranks, and there was heard the clicking sound of rifles as they were cocked, and finally a low laugh ran through the camp. Murat looked around and perceived the troops of La Verrière upon the heights, and he understood the meaning of that hollow laugh.

“If I should lead them against the enemy at this moment, in half an hour it would be annihilated, and in three days I should be master of the island,” thought the king, “this magnificent island,” he continued, casting his eye over the paradise of Vescovato: “but for the very reason that it is magnificent, ought I to stain it with blood? Ought I to bring all the horrors of such a war as they would be unable to support, upon these people who have received me as a fugitive, and as no other land upon the wide earth would have done? No!

And if I should lose all power and be defeated,—I cannot perish; I am no adventurer like that Theodore Neuhoff, King of Corsica.”

The best and finest chords in the nature of this child of fortune and misfortune trembled and vibrated with sweet and lovely tones, tones which a long military career could not wholly stifle, and which had at all times won him so much love and fidelity. He knew that at such a moment he should not speak, that tears would force back words, and that to conceal these he might pour forth inflaming language, whose consequences, in his present position, might be incalculable. He therefore did not speak; simply waving his hand on either side, he smiled, and returned, silently and with a downcast head, to the house.

There, at the entrance, in waiting expectation, stood Nadir, Benvenuta, and her mother. They also were silent as the king approached, but Mattea exclaimed:

“A blessing on your silence, O king; you have to-day merited a new crown.”

“Have I your approbation, old woman?” laughed Murat. “I am glad of that, for it seems to me that you have the spirit of prophecy.”

He remained standing before her some moments, folded his arms upon his breast, and gazed at her thoughtfully; and as it was, in truth, very hard for him to return from the camp to his life of inaction in the house, he took a seat upon the bench near the steps, and said:

“You were speaking, a short time ago, of a past, full of sorrow; give an account of it to one whose past has been full of happiness.”

“That will I,” returned Mattea, “that you may know

with what a land you have to do, for my lot is the lot of Corsican women."

MATTEA'S HISTORY.

Marioni and Ugualdo were children living in two adjoining houses in the village of Sessia, a couple of leagues from here, on the way to Ajaccio. Their families had long lived in peace and friendship, and had stood by each other in many dangers. These two likewise grew up in friendship by each other's side, and were, moreover, companions in arms at the period when Pasquale Paoli defended the liberties of the fatherland against the Genoese. The many services which, during that terrible war, they mutually rendered one another, served to strengthen their friendship. Pasquale Paoli was an outlaw, and Corsica had been betrayed and sold to the French, when one summer's night they were sitting before the house of one of them, speaking of past times. Marioni said that Corsica would not have been lost had Pasquale Paoli possessed the warlike and resolute spirit of his brother, Friar Clemens. Ugualdo disputed this, an unfortunate word, an insulting one, was dropped; they both ran in doors, and returned with their double-barreled guns; two shots were fired, and Marioni fell dead. Ugualdo fled to the thicket, where he wandered but a short time, and then went to France, where he enlisted as a soldier, and as such was sent to America. There he fell.

Marioni left behind him a son, Mario Marioni, whose duty it was to avenge the death of his father. Ugualdo had a brother, who, notwithstanding the close proximity of the avenger, immediately took possession, as heir, of

the house of the brother who had taken flight, and in which he now lived, together with his young son. Living thus near one another, they exercised the greatest caution; they closed up the windows, and even the two boys never went into the court-yard unarmed. Ugualdo saw Marioni, the youthful avenger, growing up, with anxiety, and the more so, because it was known that his mother, a true Corsican woman, daily reminded him of the sacred duty which he had to perform. She, however, watched over him, lest he should expose himself to the bullets of the eager foe. When he labored in the field, she kept her watchful eye upon him; when he went into the town, she ran now before, and now behind him, now toward the right, and now toward the left, to search the bushes where Ugualdo might be hidden. Once on their way to Bastia, she suddenly saw a musket barrel pointed out from the bushes. She had barely time to throw herself upon her son, and shield him with her body, and immediately fell a corpse to the ground. Ugualdo had escaped. Mario had now both father and mother to avenge. Ugualdo did not fly to the woods, for it was in a time when the officers were not so much to be dreaded; and as for Mario, he hoped to be even with him, especially as his son, who had long since grown up, aided him, and had Marioni's death likewise in view.

I was not far off when Marioni's mother fell, for, sir, Mario and I had loved each other for a long time; and for a long time I also, like his mother, ran before and behind him, right and left, when he went out, to save him from Ugualdo's bullets. I aided him in bearing home his dead mother, and never left the house afterward. He married me, but before doing so, took an oath not to kiss me as long as his mother's murderer lived. Upon the

wedding-night, after our kinsmen had left us, he turned his back upon me, took his double-barreled gun, and stole barefooted out of the house. He had calculated well. Ugualdo, who had not crossed the threshold of his dwelling since the murder of Mario's mother, thought that he might venture to do so with safety at an hour when he supposed Mario to be with his young wife. After having been shut up for months, he stepped quietly outside the door, and was about stretching himself and inhaling a long breath of the fresh night air, when the shot fell and he staggered back upon the threshold. I, meanwhile, was kneeling at my bedside in prayer. Mario entered and kissed me.

Ugualdo's son had also, in the mean time, married. Two young couple were living beside each other in mortal enmity. Two young wives were performing their labor in the two court-yards, and within sight of each other, whose husbands had each a deadly bullet in waiting for the other. It was a wretched life. Any one passing the two houses must recognize at once that the mark of the *vendetta* was upon them. The doors were barricaded and the windows closed up with planks, mattresses, and straw; small loop-holes only looked out from the windows and walls, like false eyes. They were the port-holes at which the enemies watched for each other. Sons were born to Ugualdo and to ourselves; their fathers did not accompany them to the baptismal font. Their mothers labored in the field, both of them in terror, lest the enemy might break into their houses and slay their husbands while they were away. Kind friends many times came as *parolanti*, and sought to mediate between us, and terminate this dreadful misery. But was reconcili-

ation possible when the father and mother of my Mario had been murdered?

Ugualdo had a small, strong, stone house built upon a point of rising ground in his garden, and which was closed on all sides, and was provided with but a single loop-hole, which looked upon our door. Mario could not pass it. He in return, however, opened another port-hole in the roof of his house, which in the same way commanded a view of the small stone tower, so that Ugualdo also, did not dare to quit his prison. Here our boys grew up. They often exercised with their double-barreled guns in the court-yard. Ah, how their mothers felt when they heard the shots! Oh, did they but know upon whom those shots would fall in the future! One day when they were both shooting, we two mothers saw each other in the court-yards, and we both burst into tears. As the boys grew, we had to tremble for them also. Ugualdo sent his among relatives at Calvi. My Matteo would not leave me, and remained at home. He used to sit in the dusky room and play the violin. It was the sole pleasure that enlivened our wretched existence.

There came, however, one short tranquil happy period, and here indeed, in this blessed house of the Colonna. I received an application to act as nurse to this darling Benvenuta, whom her mother could not nurse, for a false report that came shortly after the birth of her child, of the death of Franceschetti, her husband, had deprived her of milk. We stole from our house one dark night, and fled here,—Mario, Matteo, my little daughter, and I. Shortly afterward my little girl died, and my love for her I transferred to the lovely Benvenuta. During our stay here, we were safe; for Ugualdo knew that he must

not kill a guest of the Colonna, unless he wished to make all the men of Vescovato his mortal enemies. We could have lived here always, but after a year had elapsed, Mario's conscience could not sleep. His enemies were still alive, the future murderers of his child.

One dark night he glided out, supposing that his absence had lulled Ugualdo into security, and that he might easily meet him, as he left his house in the morning. But they say that Ugualdo, the night previously, was warned by a dream, others say that a woman had foretold to him, that Mario would that night leave the house of the Colonna, and still others suppose that he said to himself that Mario's conscience would not permit him to rest quiet more than a year and a day. I do not know how it was,—all I know, alas! is that Mario had not gone a hundred paces from the village, when Ugualdo's bullet struck him. He stood before him, close before him, and fired before Mario had time to take his musket from his shoulder. He shot him through the heart. The next morning he was brought to me across this threshold.

I did not weep much, sir. Ask Signora Catharina here, if I did. I buried Mario with a *vocero*, which is still sung all over Corsica, kissed my blessed Benvenuta, and returned home to Sessia with Matteo. There, within sight of the murderers, and beneath their bullets, he should grow to be a man and avenger. Ugualdo trembled when he again saw the house inhabited, and he brought his son Bartolomeo back from Calvi. His daughter had married in the mean time, his kinsmen had increased in power in the village, thereby exposing Matteo to still greater danger. That did not terrify us. We no longer cultivated the land, we did nothing but watch for our enemies, and observe their every step. We should have

famished with hunger had not Signora Catharina sent us the means of life.

Year after year thus passed away. We seldom left the house except to come here by a circuitous route and visit our Benvenuta. Soon after we came back, we noticed that Ugualdo had escaped. Was it from fear of my Matteo or of the officers, who, under the Emperor Napoleon, had again begun to be active? Perhaps he hoped that Matteo, like so many young people of that time, would be taken as a soldier, and would be sent to a distance. Until then he wished to lead a more quiet life. But Matteo also was fearful of being taken as a soldier, and of thus being prevented from the execution of his revenge, and he hastened after Ugualdo into the *Macchia*.

I remained at home to watch whether Ugualdo might not yet return, constantly trembling lest they should bring into the village the enemy's corpse or that of my child. It was but seldom that I saw Matteo, in a cave where I took him the means of supporting life. Weeks, however, passed away, and Matteo had not discovered a trace of the enemy, and none of the outlaws had seen him, when it occurred to me that perhaps he might have secreted himself in the village. I got ready and went to Bastia, where I spent five whole days in searching lanes and alleys, until I heard in the harbor that Ugualdo went as a sailor, back and forth between Caprera and Bastia. I immediately informed Matteo, and brought him from the woods. He hired a skiff, and toward evening put to sea, and let himself drift between Caprera and Bastia. At morning twilight a boat was coming along from the island, so Matteo stretched himself out flat in the bottom of his skiff, with his face downward, and waited. The boat came along, and as the empty skiff was drifting by,

it drew near to see what it meant. Ugualdo was in the boat, Heaven be praised, and Matteo's gun was cocked. My child sprang up, and his father was avenged. Mortally wounded, Ugualdo staggered back into his boat, and was brought by his fellow-seamen to Bastia a corpse.

Matteo, however, did not repair at once to the woods, although the officers from Bastia were already behind him, but first returned to the village, through which he walked, holding his gun aloft, and singing as he went. Bartolomeo knew what that signified. Then only did Matteo go to the *Macchia*, and in order to be near him, I followed him. The outlaws built me a small hut, in which I hoped to live as long as Matteo did. We are afraid of the officers merely, and not of Bartolomeo, for he appears to be cowardly, and has not set his foot in the woods to watch for Matteo.

He also lent a ready ear to the *parolanti*, to remain at peace as long as you, O king, are upon the island. The officers are not to be dreaded here, and thus I can breathe in peace again. Matteo is not threatened by death these days; he is living again among men, and can lie down to sleep in quiet, and I sit here happy, and look on and see him laugh and play the violin once more. To your presence here, O king, I owe this, and above all, to my blessed Benvenuta, whom may Heaven watch over forever and ever. If I have had a few tranquil days during my sorrowful life, it has always been through her that they have come.

"A blessing rests upon you everywhere, Benvenuta," said the king, smiling, as he laid his hand upon the young girl's head, and gently held it back that he might look into her eyes; and then more gravely added: "What a

people, what a land where such a lot dwells from generation to generation in the lowliest cottages, like the grand royal houses of the olden time! What great deeds could be accomplished with such a people!"

"Believe it not, O king," exclaimed Mattea; "death, not life, finds its home here. Here Bonaparte, the scourge of Heaven, was born. Ally not your fortunes to those of this nation, for your nature is a cheerful one, and can smile and laugh; the soul of this people is ever brooding in revenge. Our song is the song of death."

The incredulous smile with which he listened to her words proved how well the old woman understood him. "She is afraid," thought he, "that I shall bring war upon the island, and that her Matteo will follow me. She wishes to frighten me with the warnings of a sybil. But have I really any idea of exchanging my fair kingdom of Naples for this small island? May I not be at home there, where I have scattered deeds of kindness abroad, and where ten thousand hearts are beating with gratitude toward me?"

CHAPTER X.

THE MORESKA.

HOWEVER confused and complicated had been the situation of public affairs in most of the countries of Europe after the second overthrow of the Bonaparte *regime* in France, it bore not the slightest comparison to the complications, and entanglements, and general commotion in the condition of the Island of Corsica, as exhibited during the fourteen days following the landing of Murat. While all over the continent, factions seemed to have been crushed by the triumphs of the allies, or merged into one party amid the shouts of victory, and while the world, weary of protracted warfare, was preparing for a lasting peace, there commenced upon Corsica such a violent disruption of parties as is wont to precede an outbreak. The condition of the island was indeed remarkable. As for centuries previous, so now, it appeared to be about to pursue its own path in perfect independence, and make its own history without regard to, and unconnected with, that of the continent. The old enmity with France, which had only slumbered during the first years of the revolution, when hopes were entertained of securing Corsican liberty, now awoke anew, after the overthrow of Napoleon, and even during his ascendancy. Who were these Bourbons to whom an independent people should render submission, merely because Paris had been taken by the allies? Were they

not the descendants of that family which had betrayed Corsica, and bought it from the Genoese like a herd of cattle? And what had Corsica in common with France, who just at a time when she was prating most loudly of liberty, persecuted and outlawed Pasquale Paoli, liberty's greatest hero, the patriarch and father of European freedom, and the very soul of Corsica? It was only those holding office on the island who adhered to the Bourbons, together with that faction of legitimists which was composed in part of the old Corsican nobility, and in part of the enemies of Bonaparte, who had a greater proportionate number of opponents on his native liberty-loving island, than in all France. During the most brilliant period of his career, Corsica surrendered herself unresistingly to England, because England favored liberty more than France and Napoleon favored it. Now, when the English ships appeared at Bastia and Ajaccio, the English faction again raised its head. In defense, however, of Murat, the son of the people and child of the revolution, the husband of a Corsican, and brother-in-law of Napoleon, that most daring warrior, to whom had been confided the most important undertakings, a fugitive and refugee, who, although the Bourbons claimed it as their own, had surrendered himself to the island with complete confidence,—in defense of Murat there arose *en masse* those veterans who had fought under him or Napoleon, the partisans of Bonaparte, the old republicans, and all those to whom he seemed sent to restore Corsican independence, and finally all such inhabitants of Corsica as considered it their duty to render succor to the fugitive. His arrival shook the island in its remotest corner. Everywhere, parties united and took up arms, and three camps in different parts of the island stood

ready for battle. Within three weeks after Murat's landing, a large number of country towns presented the same appearance as Vescovato. This place, however, or rather the house of Colonna Ceccaldi, was the spot where the fortunes of the movement were to be decided. A signal there for the opening of the conflict would, within three days, change the entire country into a battle-field.

Murat very well knew the condition of the island. All the officers who had joined him did not view the matter like Franceschetti, who trembled for his native land, as well as for the king; they were heartily desirous of embarking upon some enterprise, and an effort to obtain possession of Corsica seemed more grateful to them than a fresh expedition against Naples, which the Austrians still occupied with a strong military force. Once masters of Corsica, they imagined that it would be easier to fit out an expedition powerful enough, in connection with the partisans of Murat in Naples, to replace the king upon his throne. They had established a kind of Propaganda, on their own account, upon the island, and daily received couriers from every quarter, who kept them informed as to the state of things, and as the intelligence sounded favorable, they did not delay communicating it to the king. Murat had also another source of information. The look which he had cast into Benvenuta's eyes, showed him that truth and fidelity had their seat there, and her he commissioned to make observations, and report to him. This she did with a zealous earnestness peculiarly her own; she heard not only the statements of the couriers, but especially those of such men, from among the masses, as came to Vescovato from a distance, and then informed the king of what she had learned, without reserve or suggestions of

her own. And as her reports agreed with those of the officers, how could Murat doubt himself to be already master of the island?

He heard the sybil-like cries of warning which Mattea always uttered as he crossed the threshold, and he now often left the house to go around among the armed multitude upon the square. He already felt at home in the camp, and the hours which he spent in his room passed as tediously as if they had been hours of captivity. The constant appearance of the French troops upon the heights seemed an insult, and he felt it a disgrace that, with so many brave men under his command, he was not permitted to drive them back.

It was Nadir who afforded him some slight satisfaction in this respect.

For some days past the Arab had not loitered among the trees in the garden; he wandered, like a restless spirit, about the surrounding country, heedless whether he trod upon friendly or hostile ground. The early morning dawn often saw him on some hill, far from Colonna's house, or reclining beneath a tree, or under a hedge, his eyes, however, always directed toward the place from which he had fled as if driven by the furies. He had called the attention of the king to Benvenuta, because he felt obliged to speak of her, and now that his Majesty so often laid his hand upon her head and looked upon her so tenderly, the house became intolerable to him. The preparations which were making for the conflict directed his thoughts to war and combat, and he hoped—vaguely uncertain whether it was death for which he was hoping, or whether it was that by the performance of great deeds of valor, or perhaps merely by being able to offer some sacrifice to the man in whom

was bound up all her enthusiasm, and, it might be, her heart, he, himself, would be enabled to win Benvenuta's regard.

He was thus lying one morning, when he suddenly saw himself observed by a small body of La Verrière's soldiers, who had approached by an unusual route. He sprang up and seized his rifle, which he, after the custom of the Corsicans, and in accordance with the practice of the camp in which he was living, always carried with him. The soldiers, however, beckoned to him in a friendly manner, and one of them, an old scar-worn trooper, approached him, and said: "You, no doubt, are the Arabian who came with King Joachim?" Nadir assented, and the soldier, with a friendly salute, "*Adieu mon brave!*" withdrew, it might be because they were forbidden in any way to commence hostilities, or because—which, from his behavior, seemed the more probable—he was one of the soldiers who did not altogether like to fight against Murat or his adherents.

Nadir, however, considered it his duty to leave the hostile neighborhood, to avoid being captured, or to prevent the outbreak of hostilities, but he had hardly proceeded a hundred steps down the valley, when he suddenly found himself face to face with a young officer in French uniform, who was seated under a hedge, gazing intently at Colonna's house. Nadir readily recognized him, and knew what that look signified. It was the same young officer who had accompanied La Verrière into the house, and who had been pointed out to him as Benvenuta's relative and *fiancé*! Nadir looked at him with compassion; for who upon the wide earth was capable like himself of understanding the grief that cast so dark a shadow over the young officer's handsome

countenance? He would have offered him comfort, he would willingly, after the custom of the East, have whispered in his ear one of those sayings of wisdom, which, pointing out the brevity of human life, fall like soothing oil upon the billows of despair, and allay the smarting of the wound, if only for a few moments,—for human misery is, after all, stronger than any human wisdom. He did not venture to disturb the unfortunate man thus brooding over his grief; he would, however, wait to see whether he should be noticed, and whether the young officer might not perhaps inquire after Benvenuta. He would then speak of her, and thus, possibly, he might do him good. But the Corsican is constituted differently from the thoughtful Oriental.

Galvani Serra did indeed observe him as he abruptly and angrily turned from Colonna's dwelling with a gesture which seemed to say: "Curse the house!" Hardly had he observed Nadir, when a flash of anger passed over his countenance, and he sprang up, drew his pistol from his girdle, and with the exclamation, "Have I got you, accursed conjurer!" leveled it at Nadir. But he was standing so near the Arabian that the latter succeeded, with a light movement, in grasping his arm in front and throwing it up, so that the ball merely grazed his scalp.

The report acted like a signal. The soldiers rushed down from the heights, and the men in Vescovato came pouring forth in multitudes; in an instant the report of rifles was heard in every thicket, and the troops seemed to be almost entirely surrounded. With fiercer battle-cries than ever, fresh masses streamed out from the village, and already in the distance were heard single shots and shouting, a sign that the Corsicans who were

encamped beyond Vescovato had broken up, and were also hastening forward. Galvani Serra perceived into what danger he had brought the troops by his inconsiderate deed, and that on him, perhaps, might rest the responsibility of the outbreak of civil war, and without further heeding that Nadir, notwithstanding all this, was standing quietly by, with his rifle untouched upon his shoulder, rushed toward the soldiers, and hastily led them back to the heights. It had the appearance of a flight, and the Corsicans shouted after them with sneers, and would have pursued them quite to their camp had not Franceschetti appeared, mounted on horseback, and ordered them back into the village.

Nadir saw little of what was passing, for the blood was streaming down over his eyes. He laughingly called for help, until finally Matteo observed him, and led him like a blind man back to the village.

Though all this was the work of but a few minutes, it was sufficient to throw all Vescovato into commotion, and to draw women and children to the doors of their houses. A large crowd gathered about Nadir, and accompanied him to Colonna's house, where Catherine, Benvenuta, and the aged Mattea were standing upon the steps, gazing at the returning warriors. Benvenuta, seeing Nadir's bleeding head, hastened to him, hastily tore off the turban, and with the composure of a woman of Corsica, carefully examined the wound.

"It is nothing," said Nadir smiling, and he rejoiced at the wound to which he owed the touch of that hand.

"No," said Benvenuta in assent, leading him into the house, "it is nothing, an injury of no moment, but it is important to know who it is that has attacked you, whether he be a Corsican, an officer, or a common soldier,

as every one knows you, and is aware that you are a firm friend of the king."

"You are well acquainted with my assailant," replied Nadir smiling.

Benvenuta's countenance darkened. "Galvani!" she exclaimed with alarm.

"You have guessed it. But why do you start? Is his bullet more dangerous than that of any one else?"

"Galvani is a Corsican! Beware, Nadir! that pistol was not aimed at you as a friend of Murat. I know how he has expressed himself and with what intense jealousy he views you."

"What is it?" asked Nadir; "ought I not to know, in order the better to understand the enemy I have?"

"He is jealous," Benvenuta calmly replied; "he imagines that it was for your sake that I gave him back my engagement ring; he is jealous of you, Nadir!"

Nadir's head drooped, and he sighed deeply, while a bitter smile played about his lips. He was at that moment a picture of beauty, and at the same time of grief, as he opened his large, gentle, black eyes, shaded by long lashes, looked up at her, and in a kind of jesting self-derision, murmured in a low tone: "Jealous of me!"

He felt Benvenuta's hand slightly tremble as she bound her handkerchief about his head. Both were silent. At last Benvenuta said: "You love me; I know it!"

Nadir started and sank down as though he should succumb beneath the burden of these words; at the same time bending his head like a person who tremblingly listens, in intense expectation, for something further.

“Be strong, Nadir, my friend,” continued Benvenuta in a low tone. “This is not the time to yield up one’s heart to sentiments of tenderness. Great events seem to be hovering in the atmosphere around, and a noble soul should have no thought for himself, for his own happiness or misery. My sole thoughts and endeavors are for the fortunes of this man over whose head will soon hover his bright star, or else black ruin. I believe in him and shall love him as long as he remains a fallen king, a fugitive without a home. My heart tells me that should a sad fate be his, I should love him forever, but should he return a king to his palace in Naples, I shall feel toward him once more as of old, and shall think of him as the brave Murat, of whose valor and deeds I loved to hear—Murat, Queen Caroline’s husband, who will be separated from me by the timid reserve of a modest maiden. I have examined my heart, and know this.”

A ray of hope beamed on Nadir’s heart. He seized her hand, and asked, in fear and hope: “And then? Suppose he is victorious?”

“Of course,” replied Benvenuta, “I shall love those friends who have been true to him in adversity.”

“And then?” again asked Nadir more earnestly.

“I do not know what then,” replied Benvenuta sadly; “I know you, Nadir; you are stronger than the generality of men, and you have that higher strength which is denied to so many strong men, the power of living for others. Forget yourself—you can do it. You surely know that fate never created and designed for each other two human hearts, one of whom was born upon the banks of the Nile and the other upon this island, and between whom diverse faiths stretch an impassable waste and abyss. Yet,” added she, after an instant’s reflec-

tion, "that would be nothing; if I loved you, I could follow you to the banks of the Nile."

Nadir pressed her hands to his bosom; she bent over him and said: "Kiss me."

A cry was half wrung from his breast, but died away before it was uttered. He threw his arms about her, and pressed his lips upon her mouth until, overcome by bliss, his arms fell inertly at his side, and with closed eyes, he murmured: "Enough—enough happiness for a lifetime!"

She placed her hand upon his brow, and whispered expressively in his ear, so that it was heard by the half-unconscious man: "For a lifetime! It was so intended, my friend; farewell!" and then, with a light tread, she left the apartment.

Vescovato, in the mean time, had undergone a complete change; village and hills had become a theater and stage; a large number of warriors had changed into play-actors, and the military encampment was a place of festivity.

The king, aroused by the warlike tumult, had come out, and was received with shouts, for in view of the hasty retreat of the enemy, who had even quit the heights, the Corsicans felt as though they had won a victory for Murat; and thus shouting, they quickly proceeded to the performance of a play, the celebration of a *fête* which they had prepared long since, in honor of their guest.

A chair for the king was placed upon a slight elevation before his house, and upon his right and left were seats for the members of Colonna's family and that of Franceschetti. Upon the roofs of the houses, upon the hills and trees, in expectation and excitement, but yet

respectful in their demeanor, were seated men, women, and children,—for the Moreska was to be performed, that ancient national dance of the Corsicans of which every child had heard, as of something wonderful, but which few knew, as it was performed but seldom, and then in times of great importance and excitement. It was known by all that this dance had been performed before Sampiero and Paoli, the two greatest national heroes, and every one was inspired with a spirit of religious devotion by the thought of seeing what these had seen, and the fact that the Moreska was to be performed was considered by all as a kind of prophecy that great events were in progress.

Upon a small platform in the middle of the square stood waiting Matteo, with his violin.

“You’ll see,” said his mother, who had stationed herself between Murat and the aged Colonna, “you’ll see, gentlemen, what a thorough Corsican I brought up my Matteo, and how he can play all the melodies of the Moreska as well as if he had been by, at the very time when, after the conquest of Marianna, they invented the dance and composed a song to keep it in perpetual remembrance,—I have sung him the songs so often, beside the cradle, and afterward in the *Macchia*, to cheer up his spirits.”

At a given signal from the Capuchin monastery, from which a green banner was waving, Matteo indeed commenced to play upon his violin a melody which, with the following ones, had a peculiar character, as if they sprung from ancient times and distant lands. As soon as the music began, the theater appeared transformed, and there seemed a general expectation that strange forms would appear and deeds and wonders of a fabu-

lous age take place. Although he played with no accompaniment, yet the tones, which were on a high key, and somewhat shrill, were so full that they could be distinctly heard all over the village, and the sound was so peculiar that it made the hearers fancy that it was not a violin to which they were listening, but some new, unknown, or rather ancient instrument which had long since been forgotten.

“Doesn’t one imagine that he hears the devout prayers of the Christians and the despair of the Saracens?” asked Mattea, and added: “As you, Signor Colonna, are a descendant of Hugo Colonna, that great hero who delivered Corsica from the Saracens, and who is the hero of the Moreska, I think it must ring in your blood just as it does from Matteo’s violin, and that it must be as familiar to you as the sound of your own voice.”

“The melody,” answered the aged man, “is certainly as dear to me as life, but not because I am a Colonna, but because I am a Corsican. I saw the Moreska performed here, in my happy, youthful days, before Pasquale Paoli; how should I have forgotten it? Those were times of a heroic bravery greater than that of warfare with the Saracens, greater even than that of the times which we all have witnessed, not excepting Napoleon’s great battles, for then a feeble people were struggling for a great cause,—for liberty.”

“You are right, my aged host,” assented Murat; “since I have studied your history and that of your nation, the wars of the Empire and my own victories appear utterly devoid of soul, and seem like deeds of the coldest selfishness. Beneath my government in Naples, liberty increased in a degree before unknown to the

land, yet with my whole heart I wish once more while I live, to gain the power to atone for all the guilt which Napoleon and all his paladins have brought upon themselves, by infringing upon the liberties of the people. What are we, who made ourselves kings after the manner of those of former days, when compared with those men spoken of in your Filippini, those shepherds who used their feeble strength to accomplish great deeds, not for themselves, but for their country and its liberties!"

"Yes," said Colonna, "Corsica is a good school for kings, because here so many have scorned to make themselves kings who might easily have done so—and this is the reason that Napoleon never loved the island, although it is his native land."

"Attention!" said Mattea, "the play is beginning. The convent represents the Christian town of Aleria or Marianna, which the Saracens have possession of."

While she was speaking, a man issued from the convent, in flowing raiment, with a long beard, a high hat, and a white staff in his hand.

"That," said Mattea, by way of explanation, "is the heathen astrologer and soothsayer!"

The soothsayer began to draw magic circles with his white staff in the air, then looking fixedly toward the four quarters of the globe, he listened with dismay to the mournful tones of the violin, and then returned to the town of Aleria, or the Capuchin convent, with every sign of anguish and despair. He had discovered no favorable omens for the Moors.

Suddenly a powerful-looking man appears upon the scene, a wide mantle flowing from his shoulders and lying in ample folds across his bosom, and in his hand glitters a naked sword. The violin utters a cry of joy,

in which the people upon the house-tops, trees, and hills around, join, for the hero is Count Hugo Colonna. Ancient songs, which have been strangely preserved in memory, burst from the breasts of the people, and so powerful a chorus resounds, that the air vibrates, and the tones of the violin are heard but at fitful intervals, above the singing. Solemnly and in measured cadence resounds the chorus, and then the host draws near Count Hugo, and marches, with a tread half military and half priestly, around the square, while daggers and swords, lit up by the sunlight, glitter in hundreds of hands, and accompany the chorus in measured movement with the clashing of their blades. Advancing to the challenge, the band of Christian warriors now move by serpentine windings before the fortress, where, firm as a bulwark, they at last remain standing, and prepare to storm the citadel. The violin and chorus are silent, and a solemn stillness reigns around. A bugle now sounds, a summons for the Moorish king to surrender to the Cross.

The Moorish king is, however, too valiant to surrender, or even to defend himself behind protecting walls; the gate flies open, and he advances upon the open battle-field at the head of his turbaned host. At his appearance shouts are heard anew; the violin strikes up, and the chorus again commences; again in ancient song the people celebrate with impartial spirit the virtues of the foe; above all, they laud the charming grace of the king of the Moors, his beautiful eyes, and his light tread, as graceful in the conflict as in the dance. The Moors also carry swords and daggers, which they wave and clash until, as the sunlight plays upon these countless blades, they seem like one glaring sea of flame.

The two hosts now stand face to face; the swords

clang as they meet, the chorus again commences, and violin, bugle, voices, and the measured tread of feet blend in an earth-stirring and heart-moving harmony. The conflict sways hither and thither, now advancing and now retreating, at times the Christians and at times the Moors. Equally friendly to both, the chorus celebrates their deeds, now encouraging and now lamenting; the warriors' dance sways hither and thither in varied measure, ever harmonious in movement, as if rocked on the billows of sound. It seems like a battle between specters, for the combatants are speechless; a visionary conflict, or a contest between souls risen from the dead.

Murat had sprung from his seat and unconsciously drawn his sword. In no one of his hundred battles had he felt as now; it seemed as if he had for the first time found what he had formerly sought in the excitement of conflict. Nadir had long before rushed into the ranks of the Mohammedans, and fancied that he was about to meet a glorious death. Catherine, Benvenuta, and even the aged Colonna himself, joined in the chorus.

At that moment two Corsican women came running across the square, leading, or rather dragging along, a man who, held fast as he was by the strong arms of both, advanced pale and trembling, like a prisoner on his way to trial or to death. Was this a part of the drama of the Moreska, or sad reality? The man appeared in too much misery and mortal terror for an actor, nor did he wear any of the tokens which distinguished the Christians and the Moors. Without honoring the war-dance with a look, completely occupied with their prisoner, and with countenances glowing with indignation, the women pressed forward to Murat, at

whose feet, knocked down by an angry blow, the terrified man suddenly lay stretched.

"What is this?" demanded Murat; "is this a part of the play?"

"No, your Majesty," replied one of the women, "treachery has no part in that sacred spectacle. This play is a bad one. I noticed this man steal through the crowd, dropping printed circulars as he went. I picked up one of them and took it to Louisa here, who can read printing, and in it she read that the French have offered a reward of a hundred and fifty thousand francs for your head. Here it is,—here's the circular,—and he had thrown away a whole pile of them, when we captured him and brought him to you."

Murat cast a glance of contempt first on the circular and then on the man at his feet, and said:

"Who fears treachery among such a people? Let him go and scatter his circulars unhindered; there is no Judas here. Let us not disturb the sacred drama, good women!"

"The king speaks wisely," exclaimed Louisa; "let him scatter his French circulars!" And the women who had come with eyes flashing with anger just before, now ran off laughing; while the prisoner, from whom every eye was already turned, stole away like a man who has just escaped the gallows.

All this took place amid the resounding of the chorus and the clang of arms. For a long time the Christian and Moorish hosts swayed solemnly back and forth with regular movement, now separated and now with intermingled ranks, now in straight lines and now surging together, sometimes fighting in concert and sometimes hand to hand, but always with a movement that was

measured, harmonious, and grand. All at once the conflict raged with unusual violence, and the chorus swelled to a tone of thunder; a curse, a furious curse, was uttered against the enemies of Corsica, not against the Moors, but against Genoa, for when the Corsicans wished to utter a heartfelt curse, Genoa was substituted for the name of the foe, for it was the Genoese who had for so many centuries defrauded them of their liberty. The Moorish king threw down his sword and fell to the earth; the Corsicans had conquered; the bugles sounded, and amid tumultuous shouts, Count Hugo Colonna entered the fortress, and the Cross waved above the vanquished town.

Deep stillness suddenly reigned throughout the length and breadth of Vescovato. Matteo's violin alone was heard as it played the air of a peaceful herdsman in tranquil fields.

Murat, deeply moved, stood leaning against the aged Colonna's seat. "How happy are you, reverend sir," he said with a quivering voice, "in being a descendant of heroes who brought freedom to their native land, and in still living a hero among heroes! To bring freedom—freedom! That wins a different glory from conquest."

He gazed in silence upon the gray head of the patriarch, and then continued: "I must begone, and soon, otherwise these people will make me a dreamer, or, as Napoleon was wont to say, an idealist."

And with a drooping head and slow step he returned to the house.

Langlade, one of the three officers who took him aboard their boat out at sea, was waiting for him upon the threshold. He had come during the war-dance, but would not disturb the king, whom he saw so deeply interested. He

now hastily announced that the ships at Ajaccio were equipped and were ready to sail.

"Shall I then indeed leave this island?" said the king to himself; "would it be impossible to persuade the authorities to permit me to lead a peaceful life here? Could I not send for my wife and children and live here in happiness? And if the Bourbons would not consent, could I not, with the aid of these valiant people, oblige them to do so? We will speak of the matter still further, dear Langlade, but I must first sleep away the effects of this dream of the Moreska."

He ascended the stairs toward his apartments, but stopped at the entrance in surprise, for there stood at the door a stranger, whom he did not know, and whose appearance and attire differed from that of the inhabitants of the country around, to which Murat was now accustomed. He seemed like a man from the city, was clad in a complete suit of black, had small and delicate features, and shrewd-looking eyes, and presented anything but a military appearance, looking more like a scholar or advocate. He bowed to the king courteously, but without servility.

"Do you wish to see me?" asked Murat.

"Yes, your Majesty."

"Who are you?"

"A *Carbonaro* from Naples."

"A *Carbonaro* from Naples?" exclaimed the king in sudden emotion. "And you wish to see me?"

"Yes, to see your Majesty! I am sent by the *Venta*."

"Sent to me by the *Venta*? To me, Joachim Napoleon?" demanded the king, with increasing agitation.

"What do they want of me?"

"Emancipation from the Bourbon yoke!"

“Emancipation!” exclaimed Murat. “Come, walk in, sir,—show your credentials and you will find me ready.”

They both hastily entered the room, the door of which Murat bolted behind him.

Hardly an hour later all Vescovato was again in motion. Officers were hastening hither and thither. They had been commissioned to choose four hundred brave volunteers to accompany the king to-morrow or the day after, to Ajaccio,—and perhaps farther.

The little man in black had disappeared. As no one had seen him come, so no one saw him go.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DEPARTURE.

THE decline of Murat forms but a short after-piece of that great tragedy, in which during more than a quarter of a century many distinguished actors played a part. While the latter made the world and mankind tremble, the former was performed apart from the history of nations, upon a small spot of territory, with only a few hundred men as actors and witnesses, but, as comported with the character of the hero, upon that small space and during the brief period occupied by the performance of this after-piece, there is a larger field for romance than during the mighty and tempestuous closing years of the Emperor Napoleon; years rendered devoid of anything romantic by his own cold selfishness. Daring, danger, the rise and fall of fortune, joy, sorrow, hopes, and fears, are all here mingled; everything has individuality and is of an extraordinary, graphic, and dramatic character.

And thus it was at the departure of Murat from Ves-covato, on the second day after the performance of the Moreska. The departure itself was a fanciful piece of acting, drawn from the stage.

In his rich white uniform, with his red sash, and with the waving plume upon his marshal's hat, and mounted upon a white and prancing steed, Joachim Murat rode away from the hospitable dwelling of Colonna Ceccaldi.

Beside him rode Franceschetti, his adjutant-general; and behind him, by his particular request, Signora Catherine Franceschetti, and her daughter Maria Benvenuta, were mounted upon mules, for the king imagined that while upon Corsican soil he could feel perfectly conscious of the safe and holy atmosphere of hospitality only when they were by. At their side, in his Arab garb, and with the bandage upon the wound on his head, rode Nadir. Then came a number of officers of high rank in brilliant uniform, some on foot and some on horseback. Following these, under the command of single officers, came the chosen band of veterans, about four hundred in number, all clad in the dark-brown *pelone* and wearing the Phrygian cap, but with arms of various kinds upon their shoulders. Behind this disciplined troop there came, walking on, or running in disorder beside it, about fifty outlaws, dressed in *pelones* or in goat-skins, with broad-brimmed hats upon their heads, double-barreled guns hanging over their shoulders, while their girdles were well filled with cartridges and daggers.

Matteo, too, was among them. He came, however, in the middle of the procession, playing his violin with a will, sometimes a march and sometimes a melody.

His rifle was carried by his mother, who strode along with the procession, looking like the goddess of battles, grown gray in the service.

All the people from Vescovato and the surrounding country were collected in the village, shouting their blessings after the procession, and bade the king a powerful farewell that made the air resound. The bells of the Capuchin convent were rung, and the armed men who had remained behind discharged their muskets in the air, and brought the echo from the mountains back again. At

the door of his house, surrounded by his domestics, stood the aged Colonna, waving his thin and delicate hand. The king waved his handkerchief back toward the hospitable dwelling, and toward the people on his right and left, pressing it many times to his eyes.

“If I ever gain power again,” said he to Franceschetti, with a quivering voice, “may I be plunged into misery if I do not rear lasting monuments of my gratitude here, in this spot consecrated to hospitality, this blessed asylum. Like a humble pilgrim, I will journey hither and make such an offering that the poorest may close his days in comfort !”

Although these words came with sincerity from a heart that was touched with emotion, and although he wiped away many tears from his eyes, his face looked as cheerful as if he were in the spring tide of happiness, and his countenance beamed with serenity upon his suite and upon all the people, who, as they saw him leave, felt convinced that he was going forward to meet a new and brilliant destiny.

In accordance with the king's wish, the people accompanied him only as far as the last house in the place, but the shouts and adieus bursting from many hundred throats, and strengthened by the echo, followed the procession far beyond the village. The men remained under arms, as they had done lately, and encamped a part within the village, and a part without, in the direction of Bastia, to oppose the troops, should they come from the town to annoy the king on his retreat, or undertake to follow him.

Thus the little army wended its solitary way westward upon the road to Ajaccio. And now the people of Vescovato must go up into the tower of the Capuchin

convent to descry the procession through the shrubbery, and soon nothing was visible save the king's white plume, and the glitter of the weapons played upon by the sunlight, until finally these disappeared in a grove of chestnut-trees, when the bells ceased ringing, and the people of Vescovato felt as though they had just awaked from a dream.

An unusual silence reigned in the place which for weeks had been so animated; the inhabitants seemed to feel that they must not break the solemn stillness by a loud word, and moved about in their dwellings with a light step, either in silence or speaking only in whispers.

Not thus quiet was it with Murat, as he journeyed on. The songs of the herdsmen greeted him from the mountains, and here and there, too, were heard solitary rifle discharges in his honor. Where the road led across the *Macchias*, savage and wretched forms appeared, outlaws with whom the *parolanti* were unable to reconcile their enemies, or those who were so filled with a spirit of revenge that they did not wish a reconciliation. They looked sadly after the procession, and gazed with envy upon those outlaws who were following it in safety. Yet they too saluted it with musket shots. The women and children in the villages came out and offered bread, milk, and flowers, to the king and his followers.

The September sun shone out pleasantly and peacefully, richer in coloring than that of summer, breaking through the balmy morning air, which was heavy with moisture, in the varied tints and gradations of the rainbow; even the shadow of the groves and shrubbery, through which the procession passed, had a bluish haze. The many springs upon the road murmured melodiously, the mountain brooks, at that season of the year still

small and proportionately shallow, swept gently down from the heights above or out from the dense growth surrounding the *Macchia*. Where the way wound up the mountain slope, on looking downward was seen the broad blue sea in its sublime repose. Reflecting back the sunlight, it surrounded the island like a halo; and notwithstanding the wretched forms of the outlaws who made their appearance here and there beside the road, notwithstanding the thoughtfulness which rested upon the faces of many of Murat's followers, as well as upon Nadir's and Benvenuta's, it still seemed like a grand and joyous gala day and the procession the celebration of a fête. It was not a dethroned, abandoned, unhappy king who was thus marching through hostile territory to meet an uncertain fate, but one invited by the people to a May festival as king of spring, and who as the personification of the spring-time passed on, celebrating the fête, from valley to valley and from village to village.

Matteo's violin did its part toward giving the procession the appearance of a merry May-day festival, for the nearer it approached the village of Sessia, his native place, the more lively grew his fiddlebow. He had not seen the village for years—years of pursuit, wretchedness and deepest misery—and now he was entering it in such state! His music became merrier and quicker, and involuntarily keeping time to the melody, the whole band moved more and more rapidly, almost in dancing measure, toward Matteo's home. Who understood him and the tones of his violin better than his mother? She walked along beside the procession, smiling as she went, looking no longer like a witch or a goddess of harmful battle, but seeming, notwithstanding the rifle upon her shoulder, a good, happy old mother.

The notes grew softer as Matteo passed on near the hedge of his neglected garden, and softer and still softer as he approached the house, until they threatened to die away in a sigh and almost a moan of grief, when suddenly they ceased—a shot had struck Matteo—he staggered, and then fell bathed in his blood. The violin fell shattered to the ground. A fearful shriek and the cry, “Bartolomeo!” followed the shot. The old woman flew forward and threw herself upon the corpse of her son, who, shot through the head, had passed away without a sigh, and lay upon the earth, reflecting, as it were, upon his features, the soft tones of his violin, and wearing the gentle smile with which he had greeted his home.

The whole procession stopped in confusion. Those in front hastened to the rear, and the entire band surrounded the mother and her son, paralyzed with dismay. Murat also had dismounted, and looked sadly and thoughtfully upon the dead man.

“It is a bad beginning,” he said to Franceschetti in a low tone; “a Roman would turn back.”

Benvenuta stood beside the old woman, motionless and apparently composed, but great tears were coursing down her cheeks. All was silent until Mattea raised her head, and in a clear voice, and with a calmness that made one shudder, said: “Fate is now appeased; I knew it.”

As the old woman spoke, one of the outlaws stepped forward and asked: “Did not the *parolanti* go to Bartolomeo?”

The old woman nodded an assent.

“And he accepted the truce?” pursued the outlaw.

The old woman again assented.

At this, it seemed as if all the outlaws and villagers present were seized by irresistible fury, and to the king,

the spectacle was a fearful one. The entire band of outlaws, followed by a number of other men, and even by many of the veterans, who, until now, had stood by in well-ordered ranks and in apparent composure, suddenly fell upon the house of the truce-breaker and murderer.

A few moments and the dwelling was cracking in every joint, and rafters and stones flew hither and thither; the building fell in and lay a heap of ruins. The men then attacked the trees in the garden and court-yard, and taking axes, poignards and knives, scaled the bark from their trunks. Shrubs and bushes were violently trodden down. This done, they took earth from the garden and threw it, together with beams and rubbish from the house, into the well until it was filled to the top. During all this work, which they executed with boisterous impetuosity, the men, as well as the women who were looking on, from time to time launched curses and imprecations against the murderer, oath and truce-breaker—everything that ancient custom decrees against one who has broken a promise made to the *parolanti* and taken a bloody revenge, notwithstanding the truce he had sworn. Had they found Bartolomeo, they would all have plunged their daggers in his body, but during the confusion which succeeded the murder, he had escaped. Justice was not yet, therefore, fully satisfied, and all the men who had taken part in the destruction of Bartolomeo's house and property, now approached Mattea and swore upon the corpse of her son, that they themselves would assume the duty of revenge as if they were all her sons, pursuing Bartolomeo through every thicket and cavern in Corsica, until his crime had been expiated by his death. They took an oath not to spare him though they found him slumbering upon his mother's bosom.

Mattea raised her head and smiled.

The king had witnessed the whole spectacle of destruction, which had taken place in an incredibly short space of time, in silent dismay; he knew not whether it was the ascendancy of the power of a savage nature which he saw, or the execution of a fearful judgment. It was both. The only word he uttered was that which he had, at first, spoken to Franceschetti, and which he now several times mechanically repeated to himself: "A Roman would turn back." It was an involuntary recollection of the words of the murdered Marshal Brune, who, as he prepared to start upon his fatal journey, and stumbled as he passed up the stairs, also said: "A Roman would turn back." He stood wavering, and looked thoughtfully before him; a singular illusion confused his mind; the face of the dead man assumed the features of Marshal Brune, and then were Matteo's once more, and then the alternations became so rapid that the features played back and forth, the one into the other; and during these fanciful, confusing transformations, he many times saw his own face, pale with the pallor of death, and himself laid low by bullets.

This phantom still appeared to him even when Matteo's corpse had been taken up by the outlaws, and borne into the house. Benvenuto held his head and Mattea followed, dragging her son's rifle after her, by the strap. All were in silent expectation, for every one perceived by the countenance of the king that he was struggling with resolutions and emotions which might change all his plans.

And now there came through the stillness, the rapid sound of a horse's hoofs, on the road from Vescovato, and every eye was turned toward the rider,—even those

of the king, whom the echoing gallop had roused from his reverie. The rider came nearer, and a look of joyful surprise flitted over the countenance of Murat and transformed his gloomy, brooding face like magic.

"Pascal Morin, my noble friend!" he exclaimed in delight, and hastened toward him, accompanied by Nadir, who had also recognized him.

It was he, the old republican from the farm near Toulon, and the king in no degree derogated from his dignity, by aiding him from the saddle, while Nadir held the bridle of his horse, which was covered with foam.

"My noble friend," repeated the king, embracing him, "a kind Providence sends you to me in an evil moment. Now that I see you, I feel once more filled with confidence and courage. And old Margaret, how is she?"

"Yes, how is the good old woman?" asked Nadir also.

"She," replied Pascal, giving his hand to Nadir, with a smile, "has ceased caring for the loneliness of her life; she remembers the days which the king passed with us, and the quarter of an hour we enjoyed with the Arabian. That is sufficient to last her until she departs to bliss."

"May she reach it in happiness and peace," said the king fervently. "And yourself?" he then asked. "What brings an old republican on the forlorn footsteps of a ruined king?"

"Sire," replied Pascal, "I felt that I must warn you. The report is current at Toulon that you contemplate landing at Naples, for the purpose of again obtaining possession of your kingdom. The friends and agents of your Majesty have communicated to me what is said and known in reference to the matter. Certain it is that the entire English squadron has left the coast of France to

cruise in the vicinity of Naples, and to keep guard over all places where it would be possible to effect a landing. It was dangerous to send a letter to your Majesty, and I therefore set out myself, to bring you the intelligence."

"Those English are eternally crossing my path!" exclaimed Murat, and his countenance was flushed with anger. "Really, they seem to do so for the purpose of strengthening my wavering resolution. A quarter of an hour ago I was not certain what I should do, but now I know. You, however, a republican of '93, may hereafter console yourself with the reflection that you have rendered a great service to a king; to you I say that I go to Naples only because the Bourbons have already shown their bloody hands, and because I wish to atone for past errors and render a nation free. I, myself, am more at liberty now than when I was the creature and vassal of the emperor. Know that the Carbonari have called me and they are expecting me. I shall be able to fight my way through the English and through the hirelings of the Bourbons; once in the country, all the friends of liberty will rally around me, and we both know, from the year '90, what volunteers for liberty can accomplish against mercenaries. I forgot it, and Bonaparte did also; the world shall now call it to mind. Give me but three days upon Neapolitan territory, and a new history has begun for Europe. I thank you, Pascal Morin; a short time ago I was despondent; you have inspired me with fresh courage. Your message of to-day, and your countenance of '93, are both a perfect fountain of courage and high resolve. I thank you! Farewell; return to your peaceful asylum, and you shall never repent having rescued a king! Nor

shall good old Margaret! Greet her for me! Farewell!"

"Sire," still said Pascal, in a timid manner, "but suppose you are unable to force your way into the interior of the country, suppose you do not reach your friends?"

"The man speaks wisely," Franceschetti here broke in; "suppose you fall into the hands of the English, or rather, which is still worse, suppose you are taken by the garrisons on the coast?"

"Then," exclaimed Murat, "I shall have been ruined while venturing upon a great undertaking, and shall at least close my career neither as a prisoner of England nor a pensioner of Austria, but as a hero, in the earnest desire to give liberty and happiness to a people whose destiny was once confided to me."

Pascal communicated to him a few more details in reference to the measures which France had set afoot to prevent any possible landing at Naples, and which, he added, would surely be multiplied by the Neapolitan government; Murat, however, no longer paid heed to his statements and warnings.

The bloody and dreadful drama which he had just witnessed, and which had filled him with horror, was entirely forgotten; no resolution formed since he landed upon the island had been as firm as the present one. He gave a signal, the trumpets sounded, the horsemen again mounted, the men resumed their places in the ranks, and the outlaws hastened from the house of mourning.

The latter were followed by Catherine and Benvenuta, who were to take leave of the king, for Benvenuta would

not leave her nurse alone, in her deep distress. They both embraced Franceschetti in silence, and in silence Benvenuta approached the king, who had just placed his foot in the stirrup. He was so deeply absorbed in thought that he did not notice her, and he would have applied his spurs to the horse's flanks without having bade her farewell, had not Franceschetti called to him and said: "My wife and daughter, your Majesty, wish to remain behind with the unhappy woman, and they desire to take leave of you."

Murat awoke as if from a dream, dismounted, gave Catherine his hand, and pressed Benvenuta's head to his breast. His countenance, however, had the expression of one whose thoughts are far away, and it seemed to Benvenuta that she had suddenly become possessed of second sight, and that, as she looked up at him, she was gazing upon the face of the dead. A cold shudder passed through her whole frame, and with a powerful movement, she disengaged herself from his arm, which lay with a heavy weight upon her shoulder, and the word "Adieu" burst from her bosom, more like an anxious sigh than a farewell.

Murat sprang again into his saddle, and galloped rapidly away, followed by the whole troop. Benvenuta stood in the road as if rooted to the spot, with both hands pressed over her eyes, as if fearing to again see him whose face she had gazed upon as that of the dead. But her hands were gently drawn away. Nadir stood before her, and softly said:

"Farewell, Benvenuta!"

"Nadir!" exclaimed she timorously, "are you still here? O stay, stay—the king goes to meet his doom!"

"And should I therefore desert him, Benvenuta?" said Nadir with a smile.

She smiled also, and grasped both his hands. "Farewell," said she, "farewell, and promise me one thing."

"What is it? speak!"

"Do not return to this island; death awaits you here!"

"And if the whole coast were beset by angels of death, I would return!" exclaimed Nadir; "I will return! I shall not die without having seen you once more. And if no other happiness is in store for me, may I be permitted but to die near you, and say with my latest breath, 'I love you, Benvenuta!' I follow the king because the ties of misfortune bind me to him, and because you love him. If, however, he goes to meet his ruin, and his fate seems to me to be written upon his brow—my father, my mother, and my brother they have slain—nothing, no one upon the broad earth is left me but you, Benvenuta,—you alone. My happiness or even my misery dwells where you dwell. The rest of the world is a wilderness. What is left to one whom no one loves, if he no longer hopes? And I can only hope near you and through you. Fear nothing—do not start! All my ardor, my desires, and my resentment against fate I will bridle and restrain, and you shall not be disturbed by any sound that shall betray the agony of my heart. I will simply wait, wait by your side, and hope. I shall therefore return, as truly as the sun returns on his daily course. Farewell! Bid adieu to that spot where I kissed your feet, and that dearer one where you bestowed upon me a kiss which I shall feel forever. Farewell!"

He hastened after the procession, which had already disappeared behind the village. Catherine had returned into the house to Mattea, Pascal Morin was letting his horse trot slowly along with a slack rein toward Vesco-vato and Bastia, and all the villagers were accompanying the procession of the king. Benvenuta stood alone in the noonday sun, beside the deserted road, as motionless as a statue.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RETURN.

THE little land of chestnut-trees, with the Golo valley and Vescovato, its principal place, is a paradise even late in autumn, although it has a melancholy air about it which betrays its terrestrial character, and shows that it, like everything earthly, is subject to vicissitude and change. Here, too, though somewhat later than even on the favored mainland over the water, death and decay enter, leaves fall, and the wind moans mournfully through the impoverished boughs and shrubs. Of the harbingers of the storm which, as can be descried from here, ruffle the sea without, and cover it with white billows, tossing them hither and thither, there is indeed nothing to be seen in this protected nook of Vescovato, surrounded as it is by high mountains; it may, however, be one effect of the boisterous autumn gales without, that the wind often sweeps like a specter's breath over valley and plain, snatching up the dried leaves and whirling them around near the earth, and then lashing them along the ground. This seems like a preconcerted signal to the belated migratory birds, which, flying from the continent, often rest here for weeks together, to recruit their forces for a further journey. Flocks of these fill the air, irresolutely flying for whole days, in wide circles, about the beloved land, and mingling their cries and farewell sighs

with the soft, plaintive tone which seems to pervade, as it were, the whole atmosphere. The breezes, however, have not the autumnal coolness and chilliness which is usual, at this season, in the north, but are soft and mild, and the aromatic fragrance which distinguishes Corsica above every country in Europe, making the entire island resemble a huge flower, recognized by its children far out at sea, in autumn grows more marked, and milder than at other seasons of the year. The rains which fall upon the high mountains with a power and copiousness peculiar to a southern climate, swell the numberless natural streams, and give the springs redoubled wealth, and a sleepy murmur pervades the land, undisturbed by the bells of the flocks of goats as they come home, slowly, because unwillingly, descending the mountains to the plains below.

Vescovato, for weeks, resembled a festive ball-room, after the guests have left it, or a theater when the lights have been extinguished and the actors have disappeared. Abandonment lay marked upon the village as a presage that the place which had hitherto been the cradle of Corsican history would be so no longer, a presage which has since proved a reality; for history, following in Murat's train, stretched her pinions for the last time over these fields, which have so many times been the scene of such great events. The mark of desertion was especially evident in the house of Colonna Ceccaldi, because of its pre-eminence among the other dwellings, and because, during every period of great excitement, it had been a kind of central point and military headquarters, in Corsica.

Where formerly couriers were passing in and out, and old military heroes, as body guards, in brilliant uni-

forms, filled vestibule and court, there was now no one to be seen. The house was deserted. The aged Colonna, its patriarch, as well as that of the whole place, was in Bastia, whither he had been summoned to answer for the hospitality which he had shown, and for the transactions which had taken place beneath his roof, and there he had been detained in confinement for several days. Serafino and other domestics had followed him, and still others had been discharged, for the house had become impoverished. Franceschetti had sacrificed to their guest what personal property they possessed, and part also of their real estate; the camp, which belonged, in a manner, to the suite of their distinguished visitor, had consumed all their stores. Murat had enjoyed royalty too long, and was not so constituted by nature as to have an eye to such household arrangements just around him as had no bearing on any grand purpose, or to recognize that as a sacrifice which had relation merely to property and matters of economy; the sacrifices, however, made by the family of Colonna Ceccaldi were too remarkable, and the hospitality exercised was too great, for him not to be touched by it, and led by gratitude to a just appreciation of what they had done for him. Franceschetti himself relates, in his memoirs, that the king, even during his stay at Vescovato, urged him to accept the remnants of his royal state, a diamond epaulette of immense value, which was, of course, sufficient to compensate the family of Colonna Ceccaldi for their expenditures. Franceschetti, however, was Murat's treasurer, and took charge of such of the king's property as, during his stay in Corsica, came in, by degrees, from France and Italy, where it had been scattered and concealed; the general availed himself of this office to

quietly add this epaulette to the rest, and with the sum, defray the expense of the expedition to Naples.

If, however, the two forsaken women, Catherine and her daughter, were seated silently at work in the large hall, more sad than the November day without, as if weighed down beneath an invisible burden, it was certainly not on account of their reduced circumstances. Of this, both of them thought little; with the same indifference with which they had once renounced the splendor of the Neapolitan court and voluntarily shunned it, they could both have supported every deprivation, and even want itself. They might have been much further impoverished, without feeling any change in their external circumstances. Accustomed to a patriarchal simplicity and manner of life, to which they both adhered with Corsican pride, their wants were not much greater than those of the poorest Corsican women, and of a kind that their means, even with a further diminution, would have supplied. It was something of greater moment which was weighing upon them—the fatality which had brought them across the path of a child of destiny, and made them actors in the scenes of history. By this fatality, the father of the family had been torn away, and the man who had passed some time beneath their roof, and given a history to their house and its occupants, and who had come like fate itself, bringing with him a thousand links connected with the great question of the world—the man who was more lovable in misfortune than in all the splendor of royalty, and to whom they were forever bound by the holy ties of deeds of love and by the performance of the highest duties—where was this man, this meteor?

Corsica had long since heard how this meteor had dis-

appeared, and what had been the fate of Murat. Why should not a cloud be resting over the house of Colonna Ceccaldi and on Maria Benvenuta's brow—a cloud as dark as a veil of mourning?

It did not tend to clear and enliven the family atmosphere, when Mattea made her appearance from time to time, to rest for a few hours or pass half the night, after she had spent several days, without resting, hunting through the *Macchias* like a bloodhound, in search of the hiding-place of Bartolomeo, her son's murderer. Her features assumed, from day to day, a wilder appearance. She came silently and went silently; by signs only did she signify to Benvenuta, when she chanced to come near her, her expectation of soon detecting Bartolomeo, or her anger at the disappointment of her hopes. She spoke but seldom, and only when about to start upon some new expedition, and then she would sing to herself some passage from the *vocero* which she had sung over her son—one of the most fearful songs of revenge which has ever burst from the heart of a Corsican mother, and which, even then, but a few weeks after Matteo's death, resounded through the whole island, and is not forgotten to this day, nor ever will be as long as vengeance for a brother's blood is considered the most sacred duty of the Corsican.

Benvenuta sat in the window-seat, buried in meditation, often dropping her work and casting her eyes, from time to time, across the square of Vescovato, toward the road to Bastia, as if looking for some arrival. She had been for days expecting a reliable messenger with intelligence as to her father's fate and that of the king, although this was already perfectly well known to the whole island and to herself also. But who is ready to be-

lieve mere rumor and common report, when those whom we love are interested? She felt certain that some one would come to inform her and her mother in person, and she had a presentiment that it would be Nadir who would do so. She had been expecting him for days. He had, indeed, himself said that he would return to Corsica, even though legions of death-angels awaited him upon the shore. When, therefore, he was suddenly seen coming across the square, she rose without any surprise, although a cold shudder passed over her, and said to her mother, with composure:

“Nadir is coming!”

With a hasty step she advanced to meet him, but paused upon the threshold of the house, as if paralyzed. Nadir also stopped at the entrance of the court-yard, as if rooted to the spot. Strange and sad emotion moved these hearts, which had voluntarily allied themselves to the destiny of a human being—a destiny which had had such a mournful fulfillment. They once more met as if after funeral rites, and their hearts partook of the sadness of the dying face of nature without. With bowed head, Nadir at last mounted the steps toward her, and seized both her hands, which she extended toward him. The heroine, the strong-minded woman, stood before him like any weak girl, plunged in grief, and he sighed at this sight as well as at the thought of the emotions which, while both drawing her to him and separating her from him, had been the cause of this change. He followed her silently into the room, where her mother also received him in silence, with an eloquent pressure of the hand. She was the first, however, to be capable of utterance.

“What intelligence do you bring from my husband?” she asked, with a quivering voice.

"He is a prisoner at Caserta," said Nadir, "as you already know, but he will soon be set at liberty, and will return to you. I would not leave Italy until I had ascertained this for a certainty, that I might bring you the consoling intelligence. The Bourbon government did not dare to carry their prosecution further, for the partisans of Murat are still too strong. I received the news at Naples, in the name of the Carbonari, who are acquainted with all the secrets of the government."

"Heaven be praised!" exclaimed Catherine, reverently clasping her hands.

Nadir took a seat by the ladies, evidently with a view of giving them an account of the events of the last few unhappy weeks. A long time, however, elapsed before they could summon up courage to request him to do so, or he the resolution to commence, unasked. All three felt the necessity of collecting themselves and of firmly resolving to pass through once more, in imagination and with composure, the sad occurrences of the last few weeks.

"Speak! Commence your narration!" Benvenuta at last said.

Nadir drew a long breath and began:

"You know how the people streamed after us all the way to Ajaccio, and how the king entered that town like a triumphant conqueror, or like the sovereign of the country. He needed to speak but a single word, and the Corsicans would have hailed him as their king, and taken up arms against France. You know, too, that it was the family of the emperor alone who showed themselves hostile toward him, and even violated the claims of hospitality. Murat was always a stranger in that cold-hearted and calculating family. The more warmly, therefore, was he received by the inhabitants and garri-

son of Ajaccio, and everywhere was heard the cry 'Long live the king!' even on the ramparts of the citadel. But the king was firmly resolved not to disturb the tranquillity of this island, where he had met with so much affection and magnanimity. The adherents of the Bourbons had not succeeded in interfering with the equipment of the ships and getting possession of them. They were ready to sail, and although but frail barks, they seemed to the dauntless man, a safe bridge to his kingdom across the sea. We started. Not until we had got far out at sea and were beyond the reach of artillery, did the commandant of the garrison of the citadel send after us a few harmless shots; they sounded like a grand salute. The king had magnanimously left behind him in Ajaccio, the large number of Corsicans who had joined him, that he might not involve them in his uncertain fate; two hundred and fifty men only, who had previously served under him, formed the entire armament of the six small barks. The insignificance of this number was the less calculated to dampen the ardor of the king, as everything that had taken place at Ajaccio had only contributed to increase it.

"One thing alone exercised a depressing influence upon the king's friends. The two brothers, Ignatius and Simon Carabelli, had been seen in Ajaccio, and General Ottavij, who had voluntarily come and taken an oath of fidelity to his Majesty, again disappeared, after having had an interview with the two brothers. It was known that they had also had private conversation with other officers in the king's retinue. A search was made for them, but they had disappeared, having been well secreted by the servants of Louis XVIII. When the king learned of our efforts to take them, he ordered that they

should be left to their wretched fate; not a drop of blood should be shed or the slightest deed of violence committed on his account in Corsica. A feeling of restraint pervaded our barks; since the Carabelli had made their appearance, no one felt any longer sure of his neighbor, and every one feared that we had treachery on board.

“This feeling was meanwhile upon the increase, when one of the traitors unexpectedly met his fate. We had just left the straits of Bonifacio, when a barge sailed by us, carrying the French flag. Notwithstanding the darkness of the night, Langlade recognized it as one of the ships which had been equipped at Bastia for the king, and which had been confiscated by the French. Forming a hasty resolution, and without previously asking the king’s permission, Langlade, who commanded one of the barks, gave chase, got to windward of the bark, and boarded her, to retake, as he said, the property of the king. The conquest, however, was greater than he himself imagined. On board this bark was found Ignatius Carabelli, and from the statement of the crew, it transpired that she was intending to hasten and seek to reach Naples before us. Before any one knew it, the Corsicans who had accompanied Langlade, had hung Carabelli to the mast of his own ship. Langlade obliged the men on board the bark to follow him to his own vessel, and, as we were without any crew to man it, he set the craft adrift, and so it drifted away, a floating gallows. At sunrise we saw her behind us with the frightful decoration on her mast.”

Benvenuta rose, brought her clinched fist down upon the table, and said, with an angry look :

“Thus may all treachery end! May no mariner dare to conduct the accursed ship into port; may sea and

tempest spare it, and may God permit it to drift eternally from shore to shore, a warning to all traitors and a monument of righteous judgment!"

"Benvenuta!" exclaimed her mother, shocked, and clasped her hands, "is that maidenly?"

But Nadir gazed upon her with admiration, as she thus stood, like an awful statue, moved by passion, and it was that moment of energy, anger, and noble indignation which riveted his heart to her. The flame which, during the events of the past few weeks, had lain hidden, as though beneath the ruins of a fallen building, burst forth anew, and instinctively he dropped his head upon his hands, to conceal the fire glowing in his eyes.

But Benvenuta laid her hands upon his shoulder, and divining his feelings, said in a tremulous voice:

"Forget yourself! Do not think of yourself—proceed!"

Nadir raised his head and tried to obey her; but he could not utter a syllable. An expression of deep gentleness suddenly passed over Benvenuta's countenance, and she anxiously said in warning:

"Take care, Nadir! The Carabelli have many kinsmen in Corsica—the large family of the Stefani. They might seek to revenge upon you Carabelli's ignominious death, as being a participator in the expedition."

Nadir smiled. Her solicitude did him good, and he was about again commencing his narration, when Benvenuta interrupted him and hastily demanded: "Is your arrival known in Bastia?"

"I had hardly landed," replied Nadir, "when hundreds pressed around me, inquiring the particulars of the events which had taken place at Naples."

"Then Galvani, too, knows that you have returned,"

exclaimed Benvenuta. "You must leave, and soon. Galvani will not rest satisfied with his unsuccessful attempt to kill you."

Nadir gave a shrug of indifference, and said: "Let me continue my account.

"Favorable winds bore our little fleet toward the Italian coast, and everything would have gone on pleasantly on board, had we known for a perfect certainty whither we were sailing. But the king himself had not fully resolved whether we should sail around Italy, into the Adriatic, toward Austria and his family, or take a direct course to his kingdom. I felt sure that he would not be able to resist the sight of the Neapolitan coast.

"After the greater part of the voyage had been performed, we were overtaken by a violent storm; a night of excessive darkness came on; one of the barks was violently separated from us and blown far into the distance, while the others intentionally left our vicinity, that we might not be dashed together, and might thus avoid the destruction of us all. When the sun again rose, we were alone; but, bright and smiling, and fatally alluring, the coast of Calabria lay before us. When the king came upon deck, he could not see our abandoned condition—he could not see that our little vessel was alone and but frail, nor how small was the number of faithful friends who yet surrounded him; he only saw the coast of his kingdom, and he leaned over the side of the vessel toward it, as though he would spring into the sea and swim to its shores. It required a heroic courage, added to the loftiest fidelity, to admonish him, in such a moment of happiness, of the impotence of his rapture, and to once more remind and warn him of the dangers which awaited him on that alluring coast. Your husband,

Catherine—your father, Benvenuta, possessed this courage and fidelity. He aroused Murat from his happy dream, he showed him his desperate weakness, and told him frankly, with all the cruelty of affection, that if he set foot on Neapolitan soil, he went to meet his ruin, and that he was in danger of closing his heroic career as an adventurer.

“This last word alone, made any impression upon Murat.

“‘You are so very much my friend,’ he replied, ‘and you show it so plainly, Franceschetti, that I feel constrained to justify myself to you, and to show you, at least, that I have not undertaken this expedition like an adventurer, but like a statesman and military commander. It was my intention to land in the vicinity of Salerno, take possession of the town, and draw about me the divisions of my army which are now reorganized there. They would follow me with delight; of that, be sure, for I know it. With these I should have marched without delay upon Avellino, everywhere called around me the soldiers and people, as well as my adherents who are expecting me, swept over the greater part of the province, and, by rapid movements, got a three days’ start of the tardy Austrians, and thus made my appearance before the capital, where, meanwhile, people, king, and government would have been trembling in fear or hope, as each one’s different feelings dictated.’

“‘But now we cannot land near Salerno?’ said Franceschetti.

“‘My plan,’ replied Murat, ‘would indeed be a mere whim and the idle dream of an adventurer, if it could be thwarted by any gale that chanced to blow. Its whole object is the reconquest of my kingdom—the emancipa-

tion of a people by the aid of the best and noblest powers it can offer. These are the Carbonari, who are looking for me. What should I ever gain during a lifetime if, mindful of my own safety, I, with perfect indifference, sailed by the shores of a land of which I was king, and which wished me back—if I passed by like a stranger a stranger's house, or, like a prodigal son, the father's roof? What my landing under the present circumstances lacks in system and prudence, heroic bravery must supply. And is not this coast the coast of Calabria, the bravest province of the kingdom—a small nation which has often fought against mighty powers with glory? Is there a land upon the earth which so closely resembles Corsica as Calabria? And with the aid of the Corsicans, could I not cope with the world? No! The remembrance of Corsica gives me the assurance that from Calabria I can conquer and free the whole kingdom, and perhaps all Italy.'

“‘God bless you, Sire, if you are successful,’ replied Franceschetti with devotion; ‘to you a noble people would owe their greatness, Europe would be one great nation richer, liberty and culture would have one more pillar, and the world would be compelled to leave the evil course which, led by the Holy Alliance, it has pursued, a course which would sink it into barbarism. Chance, however, Fortune’s bastard brother, often crosses the noblest plans, and frequently throws himself, like a highwayman, athwart the course of a grand idea, and kills its servants and priests. What if you fail—if you fall before you can arm yourself—if you are forced to succumb to the enemy? There are no enemies more cruel than the Bourbons!’

“Murat laughed.

“Death always spares me in battle. How should it not? Have not my enemies voluntarily done so? The Emperor Alexander forbade his troops to fire upon me,—me, the hero of Borodino. If fortune deserts me, I shall at the most but be taken a prisoner, but I shall not, at least, be one of my own free will, as I should have been had I accepted the Austrian passport. More rigorous measures would be not only unjust, but also a violation of the laws of nations. Bonaparte had abdicated and renounced the throne of France; he returned to ascend it again by the same means which I am to employ. He was defeated at Waterloo, and became a prisoner. *I have not abdicated*; I have a right to obtain possession of my kingdom once more. If I fall into the hands of my enemies, I shall be simply a prisoner of war, and a St. Helena would be far too great a punishment for me. But,’ added he with a smile, ‘rest easy, my friend; our St. Helena is called Naples.’

“While the king was speaking, we found ourselves in the Gulf of Euphemia. Without awaiting Franceschetti’s further reply, he gave orders to make for Pizzo, whose castle was beckoning in the distance. A favorable wind unfortunately filled our sails and drove us toward this harbor of ruin. Upon the way we passed close by one of our ships, commanded by Barbara, formerly the Maltese corsair. To our great astonishment, one of our men recognized Simon Carabelli on board. He might, however, be a prisoner. Barbara, it was possible, had been dashed against him during the stormy night, and might have taken him prisoner, as Langlade did his brother. We were soon obliged to acknowledge that this was not the case, for when the king called to him to follow him to Pizzo, Barbara paid so little heed that at that very

moment he turned his ship about and evidently tried to sail away from us as rapidly as possible. Simon Carabelli laughed scornfully after us, and took his place at the helm, as if to signify to us that the fate of the vessel was in his hands. The king turned away with contempt, and once more ordered, in a powerful voice, as before: 'To Pizzo!' and then said to Franceschetti: 'Do you see what kind of people the accomplices of the Bourbons are, and what sort of means they employ! Traitors and treachery! I must make the attempt, I must see Naples and my people once more! I must relieve those whose destiny was once intrusted to me, from their cruelty and malice. The government will persecute those who once gave me their support when I was seeking to elevate and improve the condition of the country. The thought that so many and such excellent men must suffer on account of the services which they have rendered me, leaves me no rest; the fate of my friends renders me miserable. I must, I can do nothing else! On to Pizzo!'

"It was Sunday. The bells were ringing as we ran into the little harbor of Pizzo. The king was standing upon the prow of the ship; it touched the land——"

"Stop! Silence!" exclaimed Benvenuta, interrupting the narrator and pressing her hand over her heart. "But no, proceed, my friend; but quickly, quickly; do not let me suffer as he did!"

"I will," replied Nadir, "for neither do I wish to live over again, in imagination, these terrible events in all their details.

"We pressed to the ship's side, but Murat cried out to us: 'It belongs to me to be the first to land,' and so saying, he sprang ashore. We followed him, thirty in

number, and with flying steps hastened toward the great square before the castle.

“What now ensued seemed like a horrible dream from its beginning to its close; indescribable events without end were crowded together in a narrow compass; pleasant and frightful forms flitted incoherently back and forth before the mind; years and worlds of feeling lay wrapped within the occurrences of a single day, and even of a single hour. ‘God save King Joachim!’ we shouted, as if in a dream; and the body of men upon the square dreamily gazed at us, and a few, only, repeated the cry; and, like a phantom which brings cold sweat on the sleeper’s brow, Trentacapelli suddenly came out from the throng, Trentacapelli, the leader of that Bourbon band of robbers who, during the reign of Murat, barbarously defended, among the mountains and ravines, the divine right of Ferdinand, the banished king. This cruel murderer of women and children wore the uniform of an officer of high rank, and to him Ferdinand had intrusted the duty of watching the coast. ‘Have the guests who have been announced, arrived?’ he cried with a sneering laugh, and so distorted his countenance that I felt as though I were wrestling with a horrid nightmare. He stood there like an evil spirit, and his presence exercised a benumbing influence over the men, among whom some solitary individuals, indeed, did give us a friendly smile, and seemed ready to join in the cry: ‘God save King Joachim Murat!’ but they were paralyzed by Trentacapelli as if by a frightful apparition. Thus also was it with the small band of soldiers who still wore Murat’s uniform, and who had just been performing military evolutions upon the square. The king was completely taken captive by the sight of these men, and he

no longer saw Trentacapelli nor the threatening, trembling people—he had eyes for his soldiers alone. Were they not his troops? Did they not wear his uniform? He felt as though he stood at their head, and they obeyed only his word of command. And indeed a friendly shout at last arose from a few of the men, which served to increase his delusion.

“Now, however, a handsome young man stepped out from the crowd near Trentacapelli, like a good angel beside a bad one, and said to the king in an earnest tone: ‘Here, Sire, you are lost; hasten to the Monteleone, where you have many friends. Here you have many enemies. Hasten, I will be your guide!’

“So saying, the young man ran forward, and we all, including the king, followed him, for his truth and fidelity were expressed in his voice. We ran up the road which leads from Pizzo up the mountain toward Monteleone; but the king often stopped and called to the soldiers, for it seemed to pain him to part from them. These, too, soon came after us, but through by-roads, and followed by the peasantry, who had hastily armed themselves.

“‘Look, they are coming!’ exultantly exclaimed the king, ‘and the people are joining them!’

“‘Trentacapelli is at their head!’ exclaimed Franceschetti; ‘they come as enemies!’

“‘They are taking the by-roads to cut us off from Monteleone!’ exclaimed the young man.

“The king, however, did not hear these warnings, but kept constantly stopping, in order to join his faithful subjects. Valuable time was thus lost, and we soon saw the soldiers and peasantry on the mountain above us, where they obstructed the highway as well as the by-

roads leading to Monteleone. Our men rushed toward them, and drew their weapons, to drive them back by force, but the king called to them in a tone of command, forbidding to make use of them. He himself, however, left the highway, and went aside to the people to speak to them, but these, to whom he sought to speak words of affection, instantly surrounded him, for Trentacapelli led them on. Franceschetti, however, rushed forward, protected the king with his own body, and threatened to shoot Trentacapelli. The latter drew back, and his gang fell upon Franceschetti, who engaged them in combat. I tore the king away from the throng, and he rejoined his troops, and we were soon followed by the brave general who had come to our relief, and had finally extricated himself. He advised the king to attack the force from Pizzo, destroy it, and thus make our way to Monteleone. The king replied: 'My landing shall not be the means of drawing one drop of Neapolitan blood!' These noble words cost him his life. Shots were even then falling on all sides; we were already shut in, and the multitude threw themselves upon the king to make him a prisoner. We crowded around him, and tore him from the numberless hands which had seized him, and seeing it no longer possible to reach Monteleone, we hastened down again toward Pizzo, while the soldiers, fighting bravely and falling slowly back, covered our retreat. The young man, who had shown himself a guardian angel, had disappeared, and perhaps had fallen. Everything gave way and scattered before us, and we succeeded in reaching the sea-coast.

"But our ship had floated out to sea! A bark lay upon the strand, and we took possession of it in order

to shove it into the water, and so escape to the ship. But in vain. Out of breath, and many of us bleeding from severe wounds, we endeavored, but without success, to get the bark, which was to rescue us, afloat. We pulled, we tugged at the sides and chains in desperation, there it lay as if rooted to the spot, and the crowd, meanwhile, had time to surround us and cut us down while all our efforts were spent upon the bark. Franceschetti was wounded, Pernice and Giovannini died a hero's death, Lanefranchi and Biciani followed them, and others, who had withstood death in battles without number, now fell in combat near the wretched bark. At the same time the multitude came rushing along, bringing with them, as prisoners, the soldiers who had covered our retreat and had been overpowered by superior numbers, and who now, disarmed and bleeding from numerous wounds, appeared upon the square.

“‘My children,’ exclaimed the king, overcome by the sight, ‘cease the fruitless struggle!’ and handing his sword to the enemy, he continued: ‘Men of Pizzo, take this sword which has fought with glory for your native land, and which would yet win you liberty; take it, but spare the lives of my faithful followers!’

“It was done.”

Nadir paused, overcome by the recollection of what he had witnessed. He gazed with admiration at the two ladies, who listened in silence to the account of the deeds of heroism of their beloved father and husband, and of the wounds which he had received. A silent tear coursed down Catherine's cheek, while Benvenuta held and pressed her hand.

“Do not weep, noble woman,” pursued Nadir, after a short pause, “for I have not yet told you of all the heroic

deeds of your husband. You should feel so proud, that tears can claim no right in your heart.

"We were taken to prison. Trentacapelli's band scoffed at us on our way, beating those who were wounded. The king, sinking beneath the fatigues of the hour, drew himself along like a dying man. Franceschetti went before us, bleeding from his wounds, weak and pale, but erect and haughty, and constantly looking back to the king. One of the furious men then fell upon Murat, swinging his axe in the air. 'Stop!' exclaimed Franceschetti with the last remnant of his strength, 'I am the king! The general who follows me is innocent! Spare his life!' And immediately the axe glittered above his head, ready to dash him to pieces. The people, however, who were around Franceschetti, and who had until now suffered him to be abused, touched by his magnanimity, arrested the axe of the murderer, and the king, Franceschetti, and the rest reached the prison without losing their lives.

"Trentacapelli followed us, fell upon the king like a robber, and plundered him of what valuables he had left.

"There in the darkness we silently sat, or lay down around the king, our wounds still bleeding. Shortly after, however, threatening cries, curses and imprecations again burst upon us, and these were followed by a furious crowd, who, like actors upon the stage, swung axes, swords, and daggers, above our heads or pointed them at our bosoms. Not until toward evening did a captain, a Greek, with forty soldiers, take possession of the prison and deliver us from Trentacapelli and his band. Oh! the sad night that followed that fatal day!"

Nadir was here interrupted by a strange cry, which

came bursting from the court-yard in a fierce and heart-rending tone, and yet one of triumph, like a shout of joy and at the same time like the most horrible battle-cry. He and the two ladies rose from their seats and looked expectantly toward the door, which sprang open as if forced by a blow from without, and there in the twilight, which had in the mean time fallen, stood Mattea upon the threshold, laughing. A fearful joy was visible in her aged face, from which every wrinkle seemed to have disappeared, and whose pallor was animated by an inward flush, while her eyes appeared to have expanded to double their size. They shone in the twilight like those of a cat.

“Bartolomeo is dead!” whispered Benvenuta to herself, in a hardly audible voice.

“You have it!” exclaimed Mattea, and again laughed. “How could he escape my vengeance? All the outlaws were upon his track like bloodhounds. I had filled them with an unquenchable thirst for his blood. He fled from thicket to thicket and from cavern to cavern; every day since *that day*, he died a hundred imaginary deaths; fear killed him, inch by inch, long before the bullets struck him. To-day he was unable longer to drag himself into his cavern; I found him lying upon the road, and he saw me as I stood before him and called up the pack of hounds. He saw them coming, he saw their musket-barrels—and so he died and was buried without a tear, with no *vocero* save my laugh of scorn.”

She was silent, and looked exultantly around on the group. She now first noticed Nadir. “Ah, Arabian, are you there? The king is dead, his star has gone down as I prophesied to him,—they have murdered him. But be comforted, Arabian, for revenge still lives and will

claim its own, were it even upon the children and children's children of the murderers. Revenge, O Revenge, the stronger and elder sister of Justice, does not die. Though men may be too cowardly to claim it, Heaven undertakes the duty. It undermines the house of the man who has incurred its wrath, it sends a poisonous vapor around it, and if, overcome by forebodings and fears, he seeks to fly, it leads him astray until he finally returns within the circle of destruction. And Heaven makes no distinction between kings and beggars."

As Mattea gave utterance to these and other exclamations, she remained standing on the threshold with a joyful countenance, and as though in a state of intoxication. She now turned her eyes from Nadir, and said, in a milder and gentler tone to the ladies, "Maria Benvenuta, blessed girl, and you, Signora Catherine, whose heart is full of gentleness, I will not kiss you to-night, for my heart feels fierce, and I have looked with delight in the eyes of the dying. I go—I am weary—I am ready—my destiny is accomplished—I have no more to do. I will spread me a couch in a corner of your dwelling, I will lie down to no more rise again. Come often and see me, that I may die beneath the glance of kindly eyes."

She went. Catherine and Benvenuta followed her to prepare her couch. Nadir went to the window and looked out into the gloomy night. Mournful whispers moaned through the trees and withered leaves, which were driven on by the night wind, and his heart whispered, "This island is the abode of death!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE END.

MATTEA had spread her couch in an old arbor in the garden, which had fallen into decay, being open upon all sides, and which served as a nestling place for the birds of day, as well as for those of night. There she lay, upon a stack of straw which she had drawn thither, with her aged head supported by a bundle of clothing. No opposition could induce her to suffer herself to be rendered more comfortable. Her retreat would remind her of her life in the thicket; she wished to hear the owls screech, and the wind and trees rattle, and to see the sky through the impoverished branches, and watch the drifting clouds. There she lay, talking as if in the delirium of fever, prophesying, warning, and threatening, so that the ladies did not leave her until late, when she had fallen into a slumber, and they could leave her in the care of a maid.

When they returned to the sitting-room, they found Nadir seated before the table, motionless, and with his face buried in his hands, lost in thought, as though entirely unconscious of what was passing around him. Only when they placed the lamp upon the table did he awake from this deep abstraction, and looking at Benvenuta with an almost morose expression, said, evidently unconscious that he was giving his thoughts words :

"Benvenuta, your heart is dead, for it is bound to the dead and has followed him, and no flickering flame is left for those who love you."

Catherine and Benvenuta were silent; they felt that he was speaking in a kind of dream, and Catherine repressed a sigh.

Nadir awoke but slowly from his dreamy state, while his countenance, which was fixed upon Benvenuta's features, gradually assumed a milder expression, until, finally, he passed his hand over his brow, and drawing a long breath, said:

"I am but a messenger! I came to communicate intelligence. Murat and Franceschetti sent me, and I must continue my narration."

And after a short pause, in which he endeavored to arouse himself and collect his thoughts, he again proceeded, without more urging:

"There is little more to be told. We lay in prison, while Trentacapelli's gang were raving outside. At one time our hopes were excited, for the inhabitants of Monteleone made their appearance in arms, to attempt to liberate the king; but the castle had meanwhile been occupied by a large number of soldiers, and when the people of Monteleone left, the king's tutelar genius departed hopelessly and forever. Instead of these friends, there came men who styled themselves judges, bringing with them the sentence of death. Among them sat such persons as had received benefits at the hands of Murat; they had now to give some pledge to the Bourbons that they had effaced the remembrance of these benefits from their hearts. When they spoke to him of a trial and of judges, the king smiled, and refused to appear before them. While they were sitting and pronouncing sen-

tence, he wrote a farewell letter to his wife and children. Here it is, unsealed, as he gave it to me ; you will see that the queen receives it."

So saying, he drew a letter from his bosom and placed it before Benvenuta. She, however, merely gazed at it, without touching it or moving. Catherine took it up, unfolded it, and read with a quivering voice :

"MY DEAR CAROLINE,—My last hour has come ; in a short time I shall have ceased to live ; in a short time your husband will be no more. Do not forget me ; my life has been stained by no injustice. Farewell, my Achilles ; farewell, my Letitia ; farewell, my Lucian ; farewell, my Louisa ; prove to the world that you are worthy of me. I leave you without a kingdom, without property, surrounded by my numerous enemies ; be ever united ; rise superior to misfortune ; remember what you are and what you were, and God will bless you. Do not curse my memory. Be assured that the greatest sorrow of my last moments is that I die far from my children.

"I leave you my paternal blessing, my embraces, and my tears. Remain true to the memory of your unhappy father."

Catherine laid the letter upon the table, weeping as she did so, and Nadir said :

"The king himself wept as he wrote the letter and gave it to me. Directly afterward," continued Nadir, "an officer entered the cell and demanded whether the king was ready for death.

"‘I am,’ replied the king.

“A tear was still resting upon his eyelashes, but erect and haughty, as handsome as during his palmiest days, he followed the officer, though not far, for he had but to cross the threshold of his cell. In the narrow passage without, stood twelve men with their weapons raised and cocked. He stepped on before their muzzles with a firm step, and with an equally firm voice said: ‘Soldiers, do not make me suffer long; the space is small—rest your weapons upon my breast!’ He then fixed his eyes upon the portrait which he held in his hands—the rifles were discharged—he fell.”

Benvenuta dropped from her seat and lay upon the ground, as though the twelve Neapolitan bullets had pierced her own heart.

“My child, my child!” cried Catherine; “alas for the hour that brought him here!”

Nadir had rushed to her, and placing his hands beneath the head of the swooning girl, and bending over her, he murmured, in a tone of lament and reproach:

“Why does your heart cling to a dead friend, when a living one loves you with his whole soul?”

It seemed as if the fainting girl had not lost her force of will; a quiver of her lips and eyelids betrayed a struggle with her weakness, and, indeed, she soon opened her eyes, quickly collected herself, rose and remained standing, as though she had not shortly before been lying, like a dying person, upon the floor. The pallor of her countenance alone betrayed what had just before passed before and within her. She smilingly bade Nadir good night, and leaning on her mother’s shoulder, left the room.

Nadir spent the night without sleep, in the quiet room which he had occupied weeks before, and where he

felt himself so much at home, and yet so miserable. He was vexed with himself that he should have returned to Corsica, to run, like a boy after a fleeting cloud, in pursuit of a happiness, which, as he had repeated to himself from the first, was not to be his. He cursed his acquaintance with Europe, which had taught him thus to love; and yet, when the thoughts which counseled him to flight, led him to his native land, his home appeared to him a lifeless waste, in which the happiest feelings do not thrive. But then, again, when passion raged and stormed within him, this place of his birth, where such love was unknown, seemed to him full of peace and tranquillity, and he felt drawn, by a powerful yearning, to the spot where, as a child, he had known only peace and repose, until the Europeans had come to overturn both heart and home. He sought to rid himself of European feelings, and of the European manner of thinking, and to again become a complete Oriental. What was woman to him, then,—what was love? How trifling seemed to him, and how unworthy of a man, all this struggle—all the sorrow and passion to which the children of the West subjected themselves from love! But then Benvenuta's silent form stood before him in all its strength and grandeur, and all the shame of exhibiting weakness, like the Europeans, before such a woman, fled, and he kept on dreaming and loving, and wrestling with his grief, with the weakness of the same Europeans whom he condemned, and with the passion of the sons of the South, and the fiery blood of Arabia. He intended to pace back and forth in his room and remain waking, in order to form some resolution as to his immediate future, and the night passed away, leaving him plunged still deeper in his sorrow and love. Head and heart ap-

peared to him a barren waste, when, toward morning, he had gone so far as to curse, as the cause of his unhappiness, the very person whom, nevertheless, he had followed to his last moments as a faithful friend; it even seemed to him absurd to have taken the place of servant to the man who had stolen from him that heart whose possession would have constituted his highest happiness, and held it a prisoner even beyond the grave. To how much humiliation fate had subjected him in destining for his rival, even in death, all that was glorious and desirable, while it condemned him to the lot of a servant, and made him a mere satellite of his preferred rival, a spectator of greatness and happiness from whose table there fell no crumb for him! He thought himself condemned—condemned by fate, and predestined to unhappiness now and forever. “It is so written,” said the son of the East to himself; he dropped his arms by his side in despair, and hastened out, as if upon wings, into the morning twilight.

Benvenuta, also, had passed a sleepless night, but she had not passed it in lamentation, nor in meditation on the past or the future. She had soon shaken off her faintness and its consequences, and attentively watching and devoting herself entirely to her duties as a sick nurse, she sat beside the couch of Mattea, who was tossed with fever, and whom the phantoms of delirium, like a confused host of spirits, now excited and now haunted with terror. One might have supposed that the account of the death of Murat had been related a long time before, for there now lay hardly the lightest shadow upon Benvenuta’s countenance, which expressed only solicitude for the sick woman, and which was constantly turned toward her to watch over her and anticipate her every want. In whis-

pering words of gentleness, in easing the poor, burning head, in administering draughts of water, and even in humming soothing airs, which served to lull the patient into a light slumber, the night passed away. By morning, the fever had abated, and Benvenuta then permitted her mother to attend to the sick woman, allowing herself an opportunity to think of her guest.

But Nadir was not in the hall, and a servant stated that he was not in the house. Benvenuta was seized by excessive anxiety, and she trembled in every limb. The unhappy man did not know that in Corsica, one who has an enemy cannot cross his threshold by day or night, unarmed, without the fear of death.

She threw on her mantle and hastened out through the court-yard into the village, and then, seeing him nowhere, passed on behind the houses and cottages, and along the gardens, searching in every direction, and even looking here and there behind the shrubbery and hedges, to see whether Galvani Serra's rifle might not be on the watch. The little convent bell now rung, and a thought entered her mind. She felt certain of finding him behind the Capuchin monastery, on the same spot where, the morning after his arrival in Vescovato, he had first betrayed his love. She was not mistaken. Turning around the garden of the convent, she saw Nadir near the seat, in exactly the same position as at that time, when exhausted by running, he had disengaged her from his arms. She hastily approached him; her steps through the rustling foliage aroused him, and he opened his eyes, smiled and arose.

"Come back into the house, Nadir," said Benvenuta urgently.

"That I will, my friend," he gently replied. "I merely

wished to take leave of this beloved spot before I quit it forever !”

“You are going away, then?”

“Yes, Benvenuta, I am going away. I am going home. When nothing else is left us, the memory of home abides forever ; we always imagine that we shall there find the tranquillity which we enjoyed in childhood. This spot is holy ground, and I have had a vision here like the prophets and fathers, in the holy places. I have seen my home with a clearness and distinctness unknown for many years, the broad, majestic, mysterious, sacred stream, which, as our traditions say, flows from Paradise, the cots upon its banks and the palm-trees near them. My eye sweeps in the far distance, over white and green plains, to ancient ruins of mysterious origin, and to the borders of lands of fable. Vaster, higher, and wider than here, is the arch of the bright heavens; the sun shines with a clearer glow, but the stars illuminate the azure night and are nearer to men than here. Poor, oppressed, without knowledge of the past, and without looking into the future, my brothers and sisters live in that strange world.”

Nadir’s head drooped in sadness, and his arms fell by his side. Benvenuta grasped his left hand, and looked, with tears in her eyes, into his sad and yet animated countenance.

He placed his right hand upon her shoulder, and pursued, with a quivering voice :

“I will go to them, to the poor and oppressed. To them I will bring, and with them share the treasure of love in my heart—that treasure which you, Benvenuta, taught me to find, and if I accomplish any good, it will be your work, Benvenuta. I will be their teacher. I

will tell them that the noblest secret of life they do not know. I will speak to them of woman—of love——”

At that instant a shot was fired from behind the hedge where Carabelli had listened weeks before, and, with a deep sigh, Nadir fell into Benvenuta's arms, pierced through the heart.

“Galvani!” shrieked Benvenuta, and fell with the dying man.

“You have guessed it!” replied a voice from the convent garden.

As there is no burial-place for Mohammedans in Corsica, Nadir was laid to rest in Colonna Ceccaldi's garden, in a grove of pomegranates. There Benvenuta would often sit with her father, who had returned from captivity; there she first learned of the fidelity and devotion exhibited by Nadir, amid the greatest dangers, during the expedition to Naples, and of the heroism of this child of a foreign land, of whom history makes no mention. Much more sensitive since Nadir's death than before, she would allow her tears to flow without restraint, and ere the grass had grown high above his grave, she could not tell whose memory was the dearer—that of the unhappy king, or that of the homeless wanderer.

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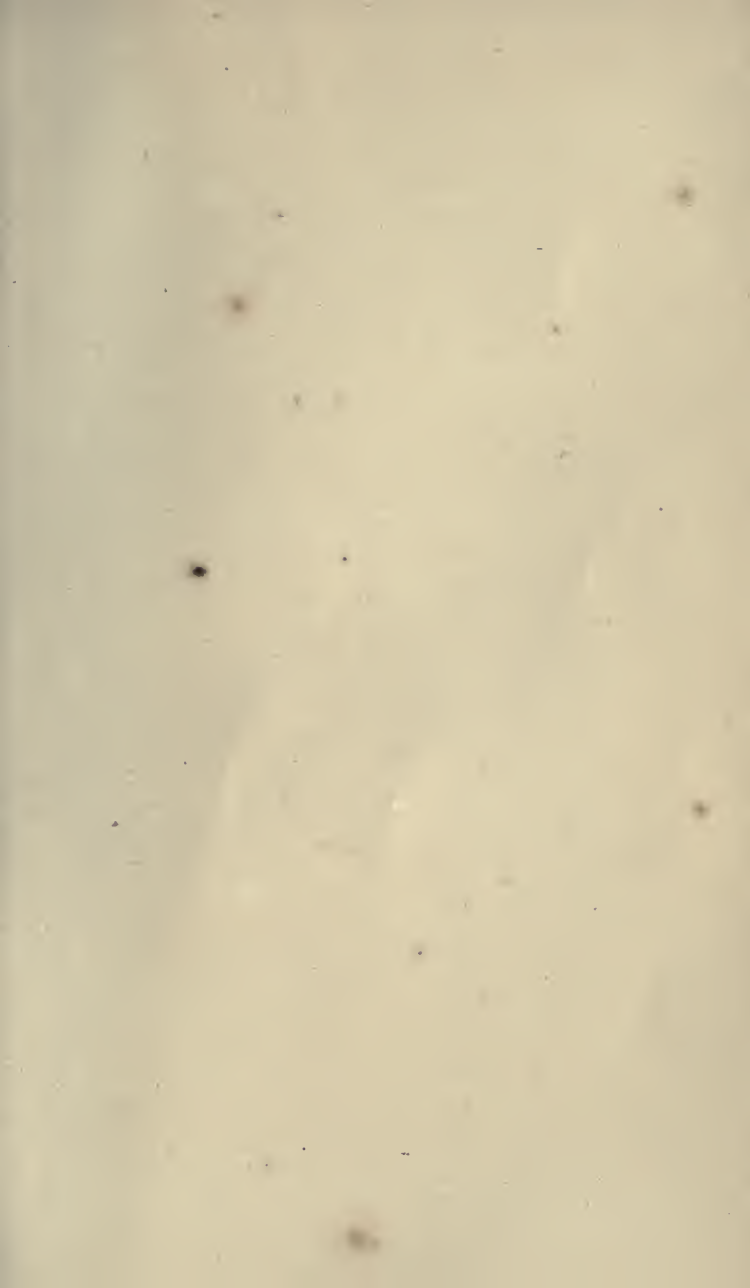
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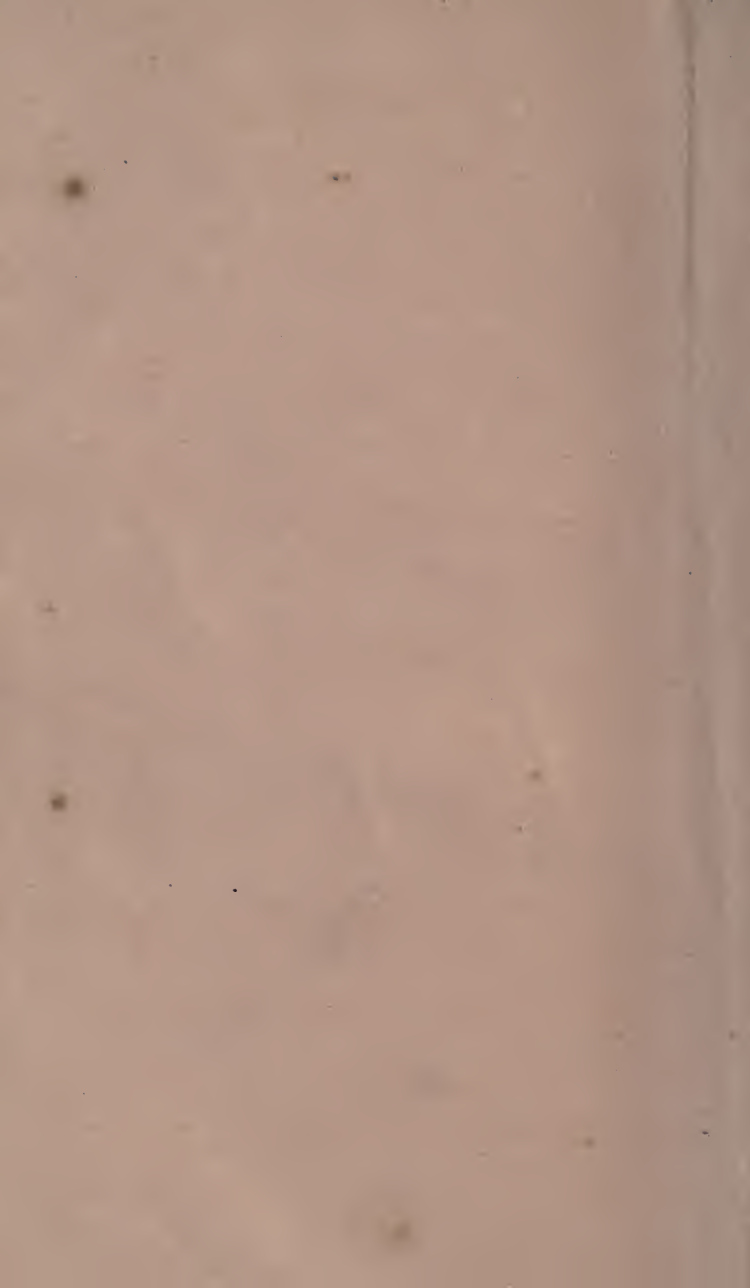
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